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Saint Paul and the New Earth

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SAINT PAUL AND THE NEW EARTH

by

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I. OF GOALS AND SYMBOLS: INTRODUCTION

In the lower animal species, behavior is characterized by a fairly narrow range of responses to environmental conditions. This is called instinctive behavior. As the evolutionary scale toward man is advanced, the patterns of behavior become more flexible. The learning ability of the human species makes it possible for human beings to adapt to new environmental conditions. The extremely varied conditions and response alternatives faced by human beings present a formidable challenge. This situation is made manageable by the use of conscious goals, which provide a focus for behavior. These goals depict ideal states that are to be strived for. They can be vividly imagined, thus providing strong motivation for action. This is called purposive behavior.

The process of goal formation and behavior learning in the human species is carried out through training or social programming. In this way the young are taught how to deal with life. Sociological studies have indicated that this lengthy process cannot be accomplished effectively without a strong emotional attachment between the members of the group involved in the process. Quoting Carlo Molari:

> The handing on of a tradition involves various people in a profound and vital relationship which is the process of socialization . . . and is made actual in circumstances loaded with strong emotions.[1]

This close, continued association is what constitutes a community. Clearly the family is the foundation community. But in the complex environments faced by the human species, the family community is insufficient for survival. It must be supported by the larger communities of which it is a part.

In order for a community to function as such, its members must share a set of goals which apply to the group. These are in addition to, but consistent with, individual goals. Specific goals, such as hunting or winning a game, may be communicated through the use of speech or writing. But the more fundamental goals which define the community are more difficult to communicate. The sharing of these goals is generally brought about through the use of signs which are rich in imagery and which evoke similar reactions in the members of a community.

John Sheets uses the term symbol to refer to signs that help effect this sharing: "A symbol is also a sign of an invisible reality but it is more. The symbol wants to communicate an experience. A symbol speaks of an experience."[2]

The sharing of introspective experience helps in going beyond individual goals to a sharing of life itself.

This sharing helps bind the relationships beteen the members of a group that have to be motivated by common goals; it makes a community out of a group.

Most human communities have formulated their fundamental goal structure through the use of religious or quasi-religious systems. Of all religious systems, Christianity has been one of the most successful. One of the reasons for the success of Christianity has been its emphasis on community ties. As John Gager remarks: "From the beginning, the one distinctive gift of Christianity was this sense of community." He characterizes this sense as being "open to all, insistent on absolute and exclusive loyalty, and concerned for every aspect of the believer's life."[3]

Hans Kung indicates how the "corporate" nature of Christianity provides a common goal system:

> The essential difference and the superiority of the Christian message, when compared to other oriental religions of redemption is that its aim is not the salvation of the individual soul from suffering, sin and death. The essential part of the Christian message is the idea of salvation for the whole community of people, of which the individual is a member.[4]

Another reason for the success of Christianity has been its use of rich imagery and symbolism. In addition to the role played by symbolism in community building, this aspect of Christianity has made it appealing to people of all levels of education, since good symbols can be intuitively understood without having to use complex philosophic

systems.

Both of these aspects of Christianity have their roots in Judaism, but while the ethnic emphasis of Judaism has presented a barrier to many, Christianity has been able to universalize its message.[5] A great deal of the credit for this accomplishment must be given to Saint Paul. In the process of presenting Christianity to the Hellenistic-Roman world, Paul was able to adapt the Christian message to a wide audience. An important element of this process was his genius for using imagery. In this way he was able to appeal to the universal human insight which can be evoked by symbolism.

This paper focuses on aspects of the theology of Saint Paul as they constitute a symbolic goal system, with emphasis on those elements that are most meaningful to the post-scientific mentality.

We will not dwell here on the subject of the authorship of the "Pauline" epistles. All of the themes discussed in the paper originate in the letters that were undisputedly written by Paul himself. The development of these themes in the later epistles is also presented, but is not important for the purposes of this paper whether this development was due to Paul or to a disciple.

II. THE JEWISH CONTEXT

The Herald

The Bible presents a plurality of images of God. A study of the biblical presentation of God should consider all of these images. This study, however, is not of God, but of the works of man in the biblical context. Given this scope, a particular biblical image of God will be discussed here, which is the one most relevant to this study.

The image chosen here as a focus is that of God as a herald, who calls, summons, beckons his people forward. This is one of the oldest images in the Bible, since it is central to the story of the Exodus. God called his people out of Egypt and assembled them into a nation:

> I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey . . . (Ex 3:7-8)

This calling constituted Israel as a chosen people, the elect of God. This special relationship is expressed in terms of a covenant:

> If you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me

> than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. (Ex 19:5-6)

This calling is often seen in the Scriptures as the work of the Spirit of God:

> The Spirit is more frequently represented as a principle of those activities that affect the people of Israel precisely as the people of Yahweh. In the period of the judges and of the early monarchy we meet the spirit as a mysterious devine influence that moves a man to deeds above his own capacity and habits of behavior . . .[6]

A number of individuals through Jewish history are selected to be instruments of God's heralding. This function is seen most clearly in the actions of the prophets. The hebrew word for prophet, nabi, comes from the Akkadian language and it means one who is sent or made to speak.[7]

It was through Moses that God called his people out of Egypt. And when Israel went astray, prophets were called to lead the people back to the right path. The role of the prophet is illustrated by the calling of Jeremiah:

> The word of the Lord came to me thus: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.
> 'Ah Lord God!' I said, 'I know not how to speak; I am too young.'
> But the Lord answered me, Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.
> Then the Lord extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying, See, I place my words in your mouth! (Jer 1:4-9)

The Called Community

The calling of God is always in the context of a community. In the Scriptures, the Hebrew word used to refer to the community called forth is kahal, which means "a meeting of the people summoned together . . ." God gathers together, assembles, the community, which becomes his community.[8]

The unity of the community is often symbolized by the use of personification:

> It is now generally accepted that the Semites conceived their nation or community, including its past, present and future members, as a single individual, who could be represented in turn by any one member of the nation.[9]

This can be clearly seen in the passage from the prophet Hosea: "When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son." (11:1)

The assemblies at the great temple of Jerusalem, built by Solomon, were of particular significance to the Jewish community. The primary function of the temple was in the celebration of the sacrifices prescribed by the Torah. The temple was also the site of special observances, such as Passover and the Day of Atonement.

During the years of exile in Babylon, sacrifices could not be performed, since this could only be done in the temple of Jerusalem. But a new institution emerged to foster the sense of community among the exiled Jews. As Joseph Tyson indicates, these exiles

> . . . managed to retain the character of a community and remembered many of their traditions. This would not have happened without some institution, and the synagogue is well suited to perform this function. It would have served as a place of assembly, for reading the Scriptures, and for prayer.[10]

After the return to Israel, synagogues retained their importance, now as supplements to the temple. They also became focal points for Jews living in other countries.

A community can function only if its members have a genuine concern for each other. The themes of justice and compassion for the needy are very strong in the Jewish Scriptures.

The book of Leviticus prescribes compassion:

> When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not be so thorough that you reap the field to its very edge, nor shall you glean the stray ears of grain.
>
> Likewise, you shall not pick your vineyard bare, nor gather up the grapes that have fallen. These things you shall leave for the poor and the alien. . .
>
> Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. Thou shall love your neighbor as yourself. (19:9-18)

The prophet Isaiah says that God is more pleased by charitable actions than by penance:

> This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. (58:6-7)

Stewardship of the Earth

Man's dominion over the Earth is seen in the Book of Genesis as part of his divine calling:

> Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground. (1:26)

The story of the Fall in Genesis tells us how man's sins disrupt the order of nature and create enmity between man and the rest of nature:

> Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. (3:17)

This is also the message of the story of Cain and Abel:

> Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you toil the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. (Gen 4:11-12)

The prophet Isaiah echoes this theme:

> The earth mourns and fades, the world languishes and fades; both heaven and earth languish. The earth is polluted because of its inhabitants, who have transgressed laws, violated statutes, broken the ancient covenant. (24:4-5)

In the story of the flood, Noah is depicted as the just man in contrast with the others who perish in the flood. He is allowed to take with him in the Ark a pair from each animal species. Noah is the man in harmony with nature, to whom God says: "Every creature that is alive shall be yours to eat; I give them all to you as I did the

green plants." (Gen 9:3)

The New Earth

King David was a special vessel of the work of God on earth, as seen in Psalm 89:

> On a champion I have placed a crown; over the people I have set a youth. I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, That my hand may be always with him, and that my arm may make him strong. (20-22)

As the later kings failed to meet the expectations of the people, hope for an ideal king, for a worthy successor to David, became an important element in the writings of the prophets. The term Messiah, which means anointed, was used to refer to this expected leader. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of this hope:

> Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; As king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. (23:5)

The prophet Micah sees this leader ushering in the Messianic times of justice and peace:

> He shall judge between many peoples and impose terms on strong and distant nations; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. (4:3)

Most of the civilizations that surrounded Israel conceived time as a cyclical phenomenon. Jewish thought was innovative in this regard, as indicated by Mircea Eliade:

> For Judaism, time has a beginning and will have an end. The idea of cyclic time is left behind. Yahweh no longer manifests himself in cosmic time (like the gods of other religions) but in a historical time, which is irreversible.[11]

In the concept of the Messianic times there is an element of repetition, since these times were originally seen as a return to the glorious era of King David. But as Messianic thinking developed, the coming of the Messiah began to be seen as a radically new event. Thus in Deutero Isaiah, written toward the end of the Babylonian exile, the Messianic times are seen as a new order, as a renewal of creation:

> Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and hapiness in what I create; For I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight; I will rejoice in Jerusalem and exult in my people. (65:17-19)

III. THE HELLENISTIC CONTEXT

Community

The Classic Greek city-states had enjoyed a strong sense of community. When the Jewish Scriptures were translated into the Greek Septuagint, the word kahal was translated into the word ekklesia, which was the word used in Greek to refer to the assembly of citizens in the democratic context of these cities.[12]

This tradition of community was gradually lost in the Hellenistic world:

> The alteration of political structures, social class mobility, and the movement from nationalism to cosmopolitanism created a certain insecurity. A citizen of pre-Hellenistic Antioch may have been dissatisfied with his status, but he knew what it was . . . The more fluid situation in Hellenistic times meant for many a loss of the accustomed context.[13]

This situation continued in Roman times. The cities of the Roman Empire were very crowded. The limitations in the means of transportation forced people to concentrate in relatively small areas in spite of the growth in population. Many of the people in the cities depended on public charity, and a great number of them were slaves.[14]

The result was a strong sense of individualism.

Even religious institutions had little binding effect. The Mystery cults, which were widespread at this time, generally met only once a year, and most of them did not entail a continued association among the initiates.[15] The more traditional Roman religions, which worshipped "household" deities, had an individualistic influence in that they were practiced by small groups in isolation. These deities were supposed to protect family members from sickness and disasters, and their worship was home-centered.[16]

Science and Labor

Many of the major themes of Western Civilization originated in the Greek world. Classical Greece was the cradle of Democracy, Philosophy, Science, and Mathematics. This revolution was related to the Greek social organization:

> It was facilitated by the easy contacts established (notably at Miletus) with the oriental thought of Babylon and Egypt. But it was also a 'child of the city! . . . It was born in a totally different world from the palatial world of the Orient, with its submission to royal power. It was born in the world of the _polis_, a secular and rational world which provided for reciprocity between similar citizens and was based on a law (_nomos_) which was equal for all.[17]

The Greek scientific advances were propelled by intellectual curiosity rather than by a concern for harnessing nature for the benefit of the community. The lack of concern with practical applications was a result of the Greek disdain for labor:

> In Greece the old aristocracy denied all laborers, including even sculptors and artists, the right of citizenship, because they thought that manual labor would debase man and dull his appreciation of high ideals.[18]

As a result, the engineering possibilities opened by Greek Science and Mathematics were not exploited to any significant degree.

The Greeks were jolted from their idealism by the Romans:

> At Rome the Greek way of life, with its endemic love of beauty, of philosophy, of contemplation, and of freedom, confronted a way of life that glorified power, organization, obedience, and discipline.[19]

An evidence of the practical nature of the Romans is that the oldest known complete prose work in Latin is the treatise On Farming, written by Cato the Elder.[20] In the words of historian Pierre Leveque, "it has been nicely put that in Latin the names of the vegetables are Latin, those of the flowers Greek."[21]

Fate and Fortune

The early Greeks saw themselves as impotent pawns in a world manipulated by gods. The great epics, such as the Illiad, show a continuous meddling of the gods in human affairs.

In the less religious Hellenistic times, the most widespread belief was that human life was simply a matter of Tyche, which means fortune, chance or luck. Tyche had been worshipped earlier as the goddess of fortune. It now

became identified with the impersonal randomness of life:

> There was a deep-seated feeling that men and women were adrift in an uncaring universe, and that everything was hazardous, beyond human control or understanding or prediction.[22]

The Stoic philosophers attempted to develop a more rational view of life, and they identified fate or destiny with the divine reason, but this did not necessarily provide a source of hope, since "fate was often viewed as a general scheme ruling the world and creating a chain of remorseless mechanical causation."[23]

None of these views provided an environment that encouraged human action. This sense of fatalism may have triggered the Greek imagination into creating ideal worlds of the mind that provided escapes from reality. These imaginary creations were proliferated during difficult times. They served the same psychological purpose as the Jewish Messianic themes, but they were less effective in that they lacked the Jewish belief in their future advent. Plato's imaginary island of Atlantis was perhaps the best known of these ideal worlds. Other examples were the Garden of the Hesperides, the City of the Sun (Heliopolis) of Iambulus, and the Aea for which the Argonauts searched.

Although created with an escapist purpose, political leaders occasionally recognized the motivational potential of these images and used them for political purposes:

Utopias enjoyed some popularity among the lower orders of society, because they lent respectability to ideas of social change. Thus when Aristonicus sought to win over popular support for his resistance to Rome's annexation of Pergamum (133-130 B.C.), he chose to call his proposed new state the City of the Sun (Heliopolis), deliberately taking a leaf from Iambulus' book, out of social as well as religious motives.[24]

IV. THE PAULINE STATEMENT

The Organic Community

In the Gospels, the disciples of Jesus are depicted as living in a close community during his public life. This was a common practice for Jewish rabbis and their disciples.[25]

Paul was very solicitous in looking after the communities that he founded, and in fostering fellowship among the members of these communities. In one of his earliest letters, he wrote to the Thessalonians:

> As regards brotherly love, there is no need for me to write you. God himself has taught you to love one another, and this you are doing with respect to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we exhort you to even greater progress, brothers. (1 Thes 4:9-10)

Fellowship was not only an essential Christian teaching, but it was also of enormous practical value for small communities in an allien world. In the words of John Gager, "the need for community is greatest among 'outsiders' or liminal groups."[26]

Following his practice of using rich imagery, Paul uses the concept of a corporate personality to help build the bonds of community. As discussed earlier, the personification of a community was a practice used in the Jewish Scriptures. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> The body is one and has many members, but all members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. (1 Cor 12:12-13)

The image of a living organism helps convey the sense of unity that the community should have. It also brings out the need for diversity and inter-dependence:

> As it is, God has set each member of the body in the place he wanted it to be. If all the members were alike, where would the body be? There are, indeed, many different members, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you.' Even those members of the body whcih seem less important are in fact indispensable. (1 Cor 12:18-22)

In a sense, Christianity was an answer to the needs of the Hellenistic world. In the midst of a disoriented and individualistic world, the Christians shone as a community with an integral life. Thus the new religion gained adherents in great numbers in the cities of the eastern region of the Roman Empire.

Christianity demanded a great deal from its initiates, but it also provided the support system to make this style of life possible:

> Witness is an essential feature of the faith. It makes ideals which are otherwise unacceptable, acceptable. The community provides a structure of certainty . . . The community in all its various authentic ways bears witness to the faith. . .[27]

It was Paul's special gift to recognize the needs of the Hellenistic world, and to be able to present Christianity so as to vividly convey its integrating message.

The Continuation of the Incarnation

For Paul the Christian community is not just an organic body, but it is the body of Christ: "You, then, are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it." (1 Cor 12:27) Thus the community is called to continue the work that Jesus did while he was in this world, to be his new hands and feet, to speak his words.

Just as Adam is the prototype of the man who sins and breaks with God (Rom 5:12-14), so in Jesus man is reconciled with God (Rom 5:21, 2 Cor 5:18). Jesus is the "first-born of many brothers" who are called to salvation (Rom 8:29) and the "first fruits" of new life (1 Cor 15:20).

Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one of God for whom the Jews had been waiting, but his message is available to Gentiles as well (Rom 9:1-24). His gospel shows forth "the glory of Christ, the image of God." (2 Cor 4:4) Paul goes on to describe the Christian mission:

> It is not ourselves we preach but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:5-6)

The Christian disciples are entrusted to spread the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19). In their carrying out of this mission they are called "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20) and "God's co-workers" (1 Cor 3:9).

These themes are summarized in the more developed

expressions of the letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians:

> This is the Christ we proclaim while we admonish all men and teach them in the full measure of wisdom, hoping to make every man complete in Christ. For this I work and struggle, impelled by that energy of his which is so powerful a force within me. (Col 1:28-29)

> It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ, till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature. (Eph 4:11-13)

The Cosmic Christ

For Paul the Incarnation has cosmic proportions:

> Indeed, the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God. Creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but by him who once subjected it; yet not without hope, because the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. Yes, we know that all creation groans and is in agony even until now. (Rom 8:19-22)

Just as in the Genesis story the Earth is soiled and alienated from God through the sin of Adam, so in Jesus the redemption of all of nature is brought about. The Incarnation not only unites man with God, but all of Creation is reconciled and brought into harmony: "It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person . . . (Col (1:19-20)

Eduard Schweizer provides an insightful comment

on this passage from the letter to the Colossians, which is thought to be part of a hymn:

> The theme of this song was not simply that God had in Jesus Christ inclined himself to sinners and redeemed them. Its theme was that love and redemption really were universal, embracing everything including the universe.[28]

A New Creation

A key image in the writings of Paul is that of a "New Creation". This image is clearly rooted in the concept of the Messianic Times of the Jewish Scriptures, particularly as developed by Deutero-Isaiah.

In the Synoptic Gospels this image is conveyed through the use of the theme of the Kingdom, which is seen as the fulfillment of the Messianic hopes. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus proclaims the advent of the Kingdom: "This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the gospel!" (Mk 1:15)

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> We no longer look on anyone in terms of mere human judgement. If at one time we so regarded Christ, we no longer know him by this standard. This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new! (2 Cor 5:16-17)

Two different words are used in Greek to signify new. Neos is used to mean young, newly appeared.[29] Kainos is "what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attrac-

tion."[30] Both of these words are used in the Christian Scriptures, but kainos is generally the word used to "give expression to the fundamentally new character of the advent of Christ."[31] In the passage above Paul uses kainos to convey the sense of a new order, the radically new.

The coming of the Kingdom is a unilateral event initiated by God through the life of Jesus. To become a part of this new order, however, requires a radical decision to adopt a new lifestyle:

> What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his creator. (Col 3:9-10)

In this passage both senses of the new are used, perhaps to create a contrast. Neos is used for the "new man" conveying the sense of the just initiated who has yet to grow. The verbal form of kainos, anakainoo, is used for "formed anew", connoting the new order into which the Christian grows.

E. Schweizer's commentary on this passage provides a summary of this theme:

> Underlying this passage there are some great Pauline themes, those which conceive of an entirely new world, which has already become an effective reality in Jesus Christ, a world which overcomes religious, natural and social differences and in which heaven has already broken through. It is into this world that the believer is removed. However, everything in now expressed in ethical categories. The discussion is no longer exclusively concerned with Christ, whom the candidate for baptism 'puts on', but rather with the 'new nature', that is the form to which Christ wants the individu-

> al to progress. Moreover, it is affirmed that this new creation is not something settled once and for all at baptism; rather the new person must be daily renewed.[32]
>
> A new life of this kind is not possible except in the knowledge that the community continue to live in Christ; that they dwell, so to speak, in the atmosphere which allows them to live and which permeates them completely. Christ is the image that fashions the entire life, just as the mother's image which the baby sees every day governs it to such an extent that it could not live without it, even if all the nourishment and medical care it needed were otherwise provided.[33]

Related Johannine Themes

The relation between Pauline and Johannine writings has been a subject of controversy. The written Johannine material is later than the major Pauline letters, but dependency has not been established. The prevailing opinion of scholars is expressed by Bruce Vawter:

> It is likely enough that John was familiar with Paul's work, which was well known in the area of Asia Minor in which John was also active. However, while John and Paul are evidently in agreement, there does not seem to be a single line of development from one to the other; rather they represent parallel development of early Christian theology.[34]

The organic view of the Church is also present in the Gospel of John, but using a different image. In this gospel Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing." (15:5)

Raymond Brown describes the sense of fellowship in the Johannine community:

> As is apparent in the Epistles, the Johannine Christians tend to think of themselves as a communion (koinonia: 1 John 1:3). There is a strong sense of family within this communion, and the address as "brother" (with "sister implied) is common because the members are all children of God.[35]

An important element of Johannine thought which is relevant to this study is the concept of the Paraclete. This theme is also present in Paul: "There are different gifts but the same Spirit. . . To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Cor 12:4-7) But the Gospel of John presents a fuller treatment of this subject.

The Greek word <u>parakletos</u> is "a legal term that had been taken into Jewish use, signifying 'advocate', 'helper', 'mediator'.[36] In the Gospel of John this term is used to signify the action of the Spirit in the disciples. In this gospel Jesus prays to the Father for his disciples:

> These men that you gave me were yours; they have kept your word. Now they realize that all that you gave me comes from you. I entrusted them the message you entrusted me, and they received it. . .
>
> I am in the world no more, but these are in the world as I come to you. O father most holy, protect them with your name which you have given me. (17:6-11)

While Jesus was here, he fulfilled his mission. Now his disciples must continue this work: "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world . . ." (17:18) However, they will not be left alone, as Jesus assures them:

> I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete- to be with you always: the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept since it neither sees him nor recognizes him; but you can recognize him because he remains with you and will be within you. (14:16-17)

Jesus must go, so that the new age may begin, the age of the Spirit working through the Church:

> It is much better for you that I go. If I fail to go, the Paraclete will never come to you, whereas if I go, I will send him to you. . .
> When he comes, however, being the Spirit of truth he will guide you to all truth. (16:7-13)

V. BUILDING THE NEW EARTH

The Future

The Hellenistic-Jewish world in which Paul began his ministry presented contrasting outlooks on the future of man. Greek thought looked outside the real world for the ideal state, and it remained cynical about the prospects of man. Judaism, on the other hand, looked forward to a better future. The Jew, and consequently the Christian, "experiences a truly 'open', namely an eschatologically open, world and he experiences his reality as a history which is unique and unrepeatable, irreversible and oriented towards a goal. . ."[37]

This future-oriented, goal-oriented view of history may have become ingrained in Jewish consciousness at their origins as a people who escaped the yoke of Egypt and embarked on a journey to the Promised Land:

> The Old Testament most frequently expresses the teleological aspect, the goal-orientedness, of history in terms of the exodus. The exodus, more than a historical event, is a biblical category, history itself has the shape of an exodus toward the Day of the Lord. Just as the exodus had promised land as telos or goal, so history has its own telos, is teleological.[38]

As discussed earlier, the Messianic promise was an essential element of the teachings of the Jewish prophets.

This was a hope that could provide encouragement to the victims of war and exile. Throughout the Jewish Scriptures, symbolism and idealized views of the future are used to nurture hope. These are called eschatological themes, dealings with the "end things". Eschatologies are essentially symbolic goal systems.

An extreme form of eschatological writing is what is called apocalyptic literature. In this genre the symbolic completely takes over, making the writings unintelligible to the uninitiated. These compositions are written during times of ordeal, to confort those who are suffering. Fantastic stories or visions represent struggles between good and evil. The ultimate victory of the forces of good serves to encourage the reader through his own struggles.

An example of apocalyptic writing is the book of Daniel, written during the reign of the Hellenistic ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He attempted to force the worshipping of his person in the conquered Judea, profaning the Temple of Jerusalem. This was a threat to what the Jews held as most sacred, and it resulted in the rebellion led by the Maccabee brothers.

Another example of this genre is the Christian Book of Revelation, probably written during the persecution of Roman emperor Domitian. Many of the symbols used in this book are borrowed directly from the book of Daniel. The vision of the ultimate victory uses images taken from

Deutero-Isaiah (65:17-19):

> Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer. I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. (Rv 21:1-2)

The gospels include eschatological writings, and it is probable that Jesus used this style of expression during his ministry. The image of the Kingdom, which is central to the Synoptic Gospels, has eschatological elements. The full establishment of the Kingdom would take place when Jesus came back triumphantly.

The early Christians believed that Jesus would come back within the time range of their lives. It is clear from Paul's early writings (1 Thes 4:15) that he shared this expectation, although he also scolded those that were idly waiting for the Second Coming (2 Thes 3:7-12).

Paul used the apocalyptic style himself (2 Thes 2:1-12), but he more often used the more intuitive images discussed in the previous chapter. His Hellenistic audience would have been unfamiliar with apocalyptic symbolism. The use of an image like that of an organic body to symbolize the unity of a community has a fairly universal appeal. Stoic philosophers also referred to assemblies of people as "bodies".[39]

The Pauline image of a New Creation is based on Jewish Messianic thought. The Hellenistic audience could

nevertheless find some resemblance between this concept and utopic thought which, as indicated earlier, had been occasionally used to motivate action. The call for renewal would have struck a responsive chord in the turnmoil of Hellenistic times, since there was a widespread feeling of "living in a world that is breaking up, in which the struggle of everything against everything else characterizes the whole of nature."[40]

As the first disciples began to die, a crisis resulted in the Church due to the disappointed expectation for an imminent Second Coming of Christ. The Church Fathers gradually lead the way to a more symbolic interpretation of this expectation. Irenaeus followed Paul in presenting the cosmic dimension of the Kingdom through which creation would "receive the Word and ascend to him, rising above the angels, to be made according to the image and likeness of God."[41] Origen viewed the Second Coming as a personal coming of Jesus into the souls of the faithful. Augustine completed this shift by equating the Kingdom with the visible institution of the Catholic Church, now established in the Roman Empire.[42] A literal Second Coming of Christ was still expected, but this was to happen at an unknown distant future when the world would end.

The Artificers of the Earth

In contrast with the Greeks, Jewish thought does

not denigrate labor. It was customary for rabbis to have a second trade that made them self-supporting.[43] Paul followed this tradition, and he was a tentmaker in addition to being a rabbi. He wrote to the Thessalonians:

> We hear that some of you are unruly, not keeping busy but acting like busybodies. We enjoin all such, and we urge them strongly in the Lord Jesus Christ, to earn the food they eat by working quietly. (2 Thes 3:11-12)

During the Middle Ages, the great monastic orders not only affirmed the value of labor in their rules, but they also advanced technology:

> Under the influence of the Benedictine monks of the tenth century, the yield of agriculture in Central Europe was tripled. The number of windmills, watermills, canals, and other installations of artificial irrigation was increased many times. Places of Western mysticism became places of highly developed handicraft and technical science, including the arts of music, painting and calligraphy. The great mystics of German symbolism, Richard and Hugo of St. Victor, were, at the same time, the great theoreticians of the mechanical arts.[44]

During the rediscovery of classicism in the Renaissance there was the danger that the Greek disdain of labor would have been emulated along with their love of beauty. However, the centuries of Christian establishment had caused its values to become deeply ingrained, and this aspect of Greek culture was viewed critically by some of the key thinkers of this period. Francis Bacon, for example, criticized Aristotle for not pursuing his experimental studies and wasting time with "abstractions" instead.[45]

A Greek theme that was taken up by Renaissance thinkers was Utopianism. Thomas More's classic book, which gave its name to the genre, was intended as a critique of the contemporary socio-political system.[46] But it was Francis Bacon who fully exploited the potential of using Utopianism for Christian eschatological purposes. In his New Atlantis[47] Bacon describes an ideal island in which "Christian virtues are realized by a technical domination of nature."[48] Thus Bacon's Christian eschatology has a strong technological theme.

Bacon made significant contributions to the scientific method. He also gave science a religious dimension as a share in the work of creation, as seen from his prayer:

> O Father, who gavest the visible light as the first fruits of creation, and didst breathe into the face of man the intellectual light as crown and consummation thereof, guard and protect this work , . . Wherefore if we labor in thy works with sweat of our brows, thou wilt make us partakers of thy vision and thy sabbath.[49]

Bacon focused on the value of science and technology as servants of humanity:

> Now among all the benefits that could be conferred upon mankind, I found none so great as the discovery of new arts, endowments, and commodities for the bettering of man's life. . . But above all, if a man could succeed not in striking out some particular invention, however useful, bit in kindling a light in nature- a light which should in its very rising touch and illuminate all the border regions that confine upon the circle of our present knowledge; and so spreading further and further should presently disclose and bring into sight all that is most hidden and secret in the

> world,- that man (I thought) would be the benefactor indeed of the human race,- the propagator of man's empire over the universe, the champion of liberty, the conqueror and subduer of necessities.[50]

Modern Science has lost much of this sense of mission. However, the best exponent of the theme of the religious dimension of science is a man of this century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

> . . . . . A Christian has a sacred, priestly vocation, essential to the Church, to associate himself- in his passion for Christ and in order to fulfil Christ- with the Artificers of the Earth. . .
> The least of their achievements in the natural field provides nourishments for souls and thereby serves, in a word, to bring about the growth of the Body of Christ.[51]

Teilhard develops the Pauline theme of the continuation of the Incarnation through human effort:

> It is through the collaboration which he stimulates in us that Christ, starting from all created things, is consumated and attains his plenitude. . .
> With each one of our works, we labour- in individual separation, but no less really- to build the Pleroma, that is to say, we bring to Christ a little fulfilment.[52]

> If this hope is justified, the Christian must be active and busily active, working as earnestly as the most convinced of those who work to build up the Earth, that Christ may continually be born more fully in the world around him. More than any unbeliever, he must respect and seek to advance human effort- effort in all its forms- and above all the human effort which is aimed more directly at increasing the consciousness (that is, the being) of mankind; by that I mean the scientific quest for truth, and the organized attempt to develop a better social nexus.[53]

The New "Good Samaritan"

The motivation for the work of building a better world is provided by Paul: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it . . ." (1 Cor 12:26)

If the Christians are meant to continue the work of Jesus, they must, like him, be instruments of healing. Wherever there is suffering, there is a calling for human effort to alleviate it.

In the modern world of specialization, it is often difficult to see the beneficial effects of the individual human labors. Thus it is increasingly becoming more important to use the style of imagery of thinkers like Teilhard to create a consciousness of service and dedication in all the professions and occupations:

> The charity of the gospels has for long been identified with that of the good Samaritan, who picks up the victim, bandages him, and gives him as much solace as he can. Surely there must be some way of giving this great virtue an even more generous and more active form? . . Love of our neighbor would wither were it to lose that flower of compassion from which sprang the rich harvest of the Hospitallers and the nursing orders; but it needs to give itself a more solid structure in some passionate attachment to the collective work of the universe. We have not only to ease but to develop; not only to repair but to build. For our generation, love of mankind can have but one meaning, to devote oneself with all one's energies and all one's heart to man's effort.[54]

The Consecration of the Earth

Agricultural and pastoral cultures, such as that of the biblical Israelites, were never far from nature.

It is often difficult for modern man in his synthetic world to appreciate the cosmic dimension of the biblical literature. Some scientists, such as Bacon and Teilhard, have been able to revive this sense in their labors to channel matter and energy to meet human needs. Not everyone is called to be a scientist, but technological progress is the business of modern society, and all citizens can politically support research, follow its progress and influence its proper application.

The Earth is man's vessel. He today has the means to ravage it and destroy it. The Earth, on the other hand, can hurt man through natural disasters and draughts. Thus it is not sufficient to leave the Earth in its natural state. The task is to harness nature to serve man's legitimate purposes, which are also God's purposes. The new order which man is called to work for must be in harmony with all of nature, recognizing current as well as future needs.

If modern man cannot recapture the reverence and love of nature that is part of the biblical view, he cannot fully receive the revelation of God. Teilhard provides a poetic rendition of this theme:

> The man who is filled with an impassioned love of Jesus hidden in the forces which bring increase to the earth, him the earth will lift up, like a mother, in the immensity of her arms, and will enable him to contemplate the face of God.[55]

VI. HOPE AND THE END

The Open End

As members of a human community learn from their experiences, they share these experiences with other members of the community so that the combined learning can benefit all members. In the most primitive communities this learning is stored in oral form through memorization and recitation. In more advanced communities information is stored in more reliable and durable forms such as written documents. The stored learning of the community can be transmitted to new generations, who can in turn continue to add to this knowledge. Occasionally some of this knowledge is lost, but in general human knowledge has been additive, and we benefit today from discoveries made thousands of years ago.

The additive characteristic of knowledge is particularly effective in scientific technology. The objective value of technical inventions insures their preservation until better techniques are found to replace them.[56] Through accumulated technology humanity has been able to control many diseases and natural disasters. On the other hand, large concentrations of population and harmful by-products of some technologies have created new problems,

and the real possibility of total destruction through nuclear weapons clouds the horizon for all of humanity.

Technological progress is often given an eschatological dimension. We saw earlier how Francis Bacon combined technical progress and religious virtue in his idealized New Atlantis, and Teilhard's writings also convey this sense. The eschatological use of technical progress is also common among non-religious thinkers, who see Science as the only hope for man. However, the reality of the problems mentioned above often leads these thinkers into a deep pessimism. Johannes Metz emphasizes that these non-religious approaches generally end in either "the utopianism of a naive belief in progress, of a paradise on earth, or in tragic nihilism and resigned skepticism about the world."[57]

Any human effort that alleviates human suffering is an exercise in Christian ministry. Specific inventions will not always be beneficial, but the continued dedication to the search for new and better solutions to human problems is an obligation of the Christian community.

Human effort does make a difference. Technology has been used to heal and it also has been used to destroy. The human future may be better or it may end in a nuclear holocaust. The future is open, and it is this open end that defines the virtue of hope:

> Only human history, 'pioneer history', is filled with creator spiritus: with pre-semblances, ardous and difficult breakthroughs and extensions beyond what has already developed, and across the incessantly hideous gulfs of bestiality. It goes forward as the experiment of that which is not yet really successful, or what is absolutely worth stating and affirming, of what can be lived under; and does so with the only real 'eschatology of the present', which is known as creative expectation. . .
>
> It is precisely hope (to the extent that it is joined to a world that does not surrender) that neither falls into despair nor sinks into quietist confidence.[58]

The Promised End

Hope in the Christian context has a further dimension, which is brought out by the following words of Jurgen Molttman:

> The world is not yet finished, but it is understood as engaged in a history. It is therefore the world of possibilities, the world in which we can serve the future, promised truth and righteousness and peace.[59]

Christian hope must include the promise of the God that calls his people forward.. This promise, first of all, provides a function of criticism, as explained by Molttman:

> It is from promise that there arises that element of unrest which allows of no coming to terms with a present that is unfulfilled. Under the guiding star of promise this reality is not experienced as a divinely stabilized cosmos, but as history in terms of moving on, leaving things behind and striking out towards horizons as yet unseen.[60]
>
> The 'not yet' of expectation surpasses every fulfillment that is already taking place now. Hence every reality in which a fulfillment is already taking place now, becomes the confirmation, exposition and liberation of a greater hope.[61]

> God is not somewhere in the Beyond, but he is coming and as the coming One he is present. He promises a new world of all-embracing life, of righteousness and truth, and with this promise he constantly calls the world into question- not because to the eye of hope it is as nothing, but because to the eye of hope it is not yet what it has the prospect of being.[62]

The constant but deepening promise is the promise to the patriarchs of Israel, the promise of the Exodus, the Messianic promise, the promise of the Paraclete, the promise of the New Earth. What is promised is always the newness of the kainos, a better future that nutures the hope of the people of God and renews its sense of purpose.

The promise of hope, as all eschatologies, also has a guiding function: it points to the right end. The promise does not guarantee that the "good side" will win the last battle, but it assures us that the "good side" is the winning side because it is the side that builds, that mends, that heals. The promise of Christian revelation is that whenever an individual acts unselfishly, a better world is built; borrowing Teilhard's terminology, it brings Christ a little fulfilment.

Results do matter. As a result of human action, suffering is lessened, more people are incorporated into a loving community, more people are helped to experience the divine reality. It is not enough to try; success is better than failure.

Thus human life is given a purpose; it can be goal-directed. This goal is not an individual goal. What is being built is not an individual life, but the life of the community as an organism, as an integral system. And this system is not composed of human beings only; the whole of the Cosmos, all matter and energy can be oriented toward the building of the new, the better.

This corporate purpose can best be nurtured by a shared vision, rich in imagery. But the images must be meaningful to the contemporary culture. This paper has focused on the Pauline images because they are very appropriate to the modern mentality, due to their organic and cosmic dimensions. It is essential to present the message in terms of the realities of modern life without losing the vision, which is what captures the will. This is what Teilhard is a master at:

> Jerusalem, lift up your head. Look at the immense crowds of those who build and those who seek. All over the world, men are toiling,- in laboratories, in studios, in deserts, in factories, in the vast social crucible. The ferment that is taking place by their instrumentality in art and science and thought is happening for your sake. Open, then, your arms and your heart, like Christ your Lord, and welcome the waters, the flood and the sap of humanity. Accept it, this sap- for, without its baptism, you will wither, without desire, like a flower out of water; and tend it since without your sun, it will disperse itself wildly in sterile shoots.[63]

FOOTNOTES

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[2]John Sheets, "Symbol and Experience," Worship 41 (April 1967):200.

[3]John Gager, Kingdom and Community (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall,1975), p. 140.

[4]Hans Kung, The Church (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1967), p. 172.

[5]Gager, p. 138.

[6]John L. McKenzie, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 742.

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[10]Joseph B. Tyson, A Study of Early Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973), p. 105.

[11]Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), p. 110.

[12]Kung, pp. 117-118.

[13]Tyson, p. 68.

[14]Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[15]Gager, p. 132.

[16]Tyson, pp. 75-76.

[17]Pierre Leveque, The Greek Adventure, trans. Miriam Kochan (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1968), p. 215.

[18]Herman Mueller, "The Ideal Man as Portrayed by the Talmud and St. Paul," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 28 (July 1966):289.

[19]George Panichas, Epicurus (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967), p. 214.

[20]Michael Grant, History of Rome (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), p. 163.

[21]Leveque, p. 218.

[22]Michael Grant, From Alexander to Cleopatra (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p. 214.

[23]Ibid., p. 218.

[24]Ibid., p. 256.

[25]John P. Burchill, Discipleship is Perfection," Review for Religious 39 (1980):36.

[26]Gager, p. 131.

[27]Molari, p. 101.

[28]Eduard Schweizer, The Letter to the Colossians, trans. Andrew Chester (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), p. 295.

[29]Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 674.

[30]Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 3, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 36-42.

[31]Colin Brown, pp. 669-670.

[32]Schweizer, pp. 201-202.

[33]Ibid., p. 203.

[34]Bruce Vawter, "Johannine Theology," in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 830.

[35]Raymond E. Brown, The Community of the Beloved Disciple (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 60.

[36]Bruce Vawter, "The Gospel According to John," in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 453.

[37]Jurgen Moltmann, Hope and Planning, trans. Margaret Clarkson (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 104.

[38]Robert Faricy, "Teleology, Prophecy and Apocalyptic in Teilhard's Eschatology," The Teilhard Review 15 (Spring 1980): 2.

[39]Kung, p. 295

[40]Schweizer, p. 81.

[41]St. Irenaeus, "Adversus Haereses," in The Early Christian Fathers, trans. and ed. Henry Bettenson (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 140.

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[43]Mueller, p. 283.

[44]Benz, p. 128.

[45]Fulton H. Anderson, ed. The Organon and Related Writings (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960), p. ix.

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[48]Benz, p. 133.

[49]Francis Bacon, "The Great Instauration," in Anderson, p. 29.

[50]Idem, "On the Interpretation of Nature," in Dick, pp. 150-151.

[51]Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Heart of Matter, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 217.

[52]Idem, The Divine Milieu (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 62.

[53]Idem, Science and Christ, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 68.

[54]Idem, Toward the Future, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 33.

[55]Idem, The Heart of Matter, pp. 128-129.

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[57]Johannes B. Metz, Theology of the World, trans. William Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 47.

[58]Ernst Bloch, Man on His Own, trans. E. Ashton (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 89-90.

[59]Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope, trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 338.

[60]Ibid., p. 102.

[61]Ibid., p. 106.

[62]Ibid., p. 164.

[63]Teilhard de Chardin, The Divine Milieu, p. 154.

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"Saint Paul and the New Earth"

Objectives of Study This paper focuses on the Pauline writings that deal with the theology of the Christian in the world, and it attempts to present this theology in the context of our contemporary scientifically oriented culture.

Major Sources Ernst Benz, Evolution and Christian Hope

John Gibbs, "Pauline Cosmic Christology and Ecological Crisis" (art.)

Johannes Metz, Theology of the World

Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope

P. Teilhard de Chardin, Christ and Science

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ACCEPTANCE: Andrew Cote
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DATE: 6-24-82

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ADVISOR: Reverend Daniel Madden, O.P.

READER: (thesis only)

DATE OF APPROVAL: 11/15/83

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION DATE: 11/29/83

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Sister Gertrude Anne Otis, C.S.C.

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I certify that all degree requirements have been fulfilled.

Department Chairman Sister Gertrude Anne Otis Date 11/30/83

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Advisor _____

date	course number and title	credits	grades
Spring '81	510M: Lay Ministry II	3	A
" '81	614 : Sacramental Theology	3	B
SSII '81	603 : Modern Biblical Scholarship	3	A
Oct. 27-28	78 592: Scripture Seminar	1	Cr
Nov. 17-18	78 592: Faith Seminar	1	Cr
Feb. 23-24	'79 592: Morality Seminar	1	Cr
Spring '82	618: Themes Old Testament Th.	3	A
SS I '82	615: Form Synoptic Gospels	3	A
Fall '81	604: Anthropology and Faith	3	A
Spr. '83	605: Christ and the Church	3	A
[illegible] '83	REL 519: Gospel of St. [illegible]	3	A
Fall '83	RSP: 567: Eth Prin & Soc Doctrine Church	3	A

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION BALLOT

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy

Barry University

Student Name Alfredo Romagosa

You are requested to grade the student on each of the categories below according to the scale: (pass with distinction)
pass
low pass
fail

Areas of Examination

1. Subject of paper or project Saint Paul and the New Earth grade _____
2. _____ grade _____
3. _____ grade _____

In Religious Studies, the student selects two of the following areas: scripture, doctrine, morality, pastoral theology.

In Pastoral Ministry, the examination includes a field of specialization and pastoral theology.

In Religious Education Administration the examination includes general areas and a field of specialization.

Examiner Fr. Daniel P. Madden, O.P. Date 11/29/83

This form must be returned immediately to the department chairmen. The Dean will officially notify the student of the outcome of [illegible]

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION BALLOT

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy

Barry University

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Areas of Examination

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Examiner Sr Kathleen F Romagosa Date 11/29/82

This form must be returned immediately to the department chairman. The Dean will officially notify the student of the outcome of the oral examination.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION BALLOT

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy

Barry University

Student Name Alfredo Romagosa

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Areas of Examination

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Examiner Sister Gertrude Anne Date 11/29/18

This form must be returned immediately to the department chairmen. The Dean will officially notify the student of the outcome of the oral examination.