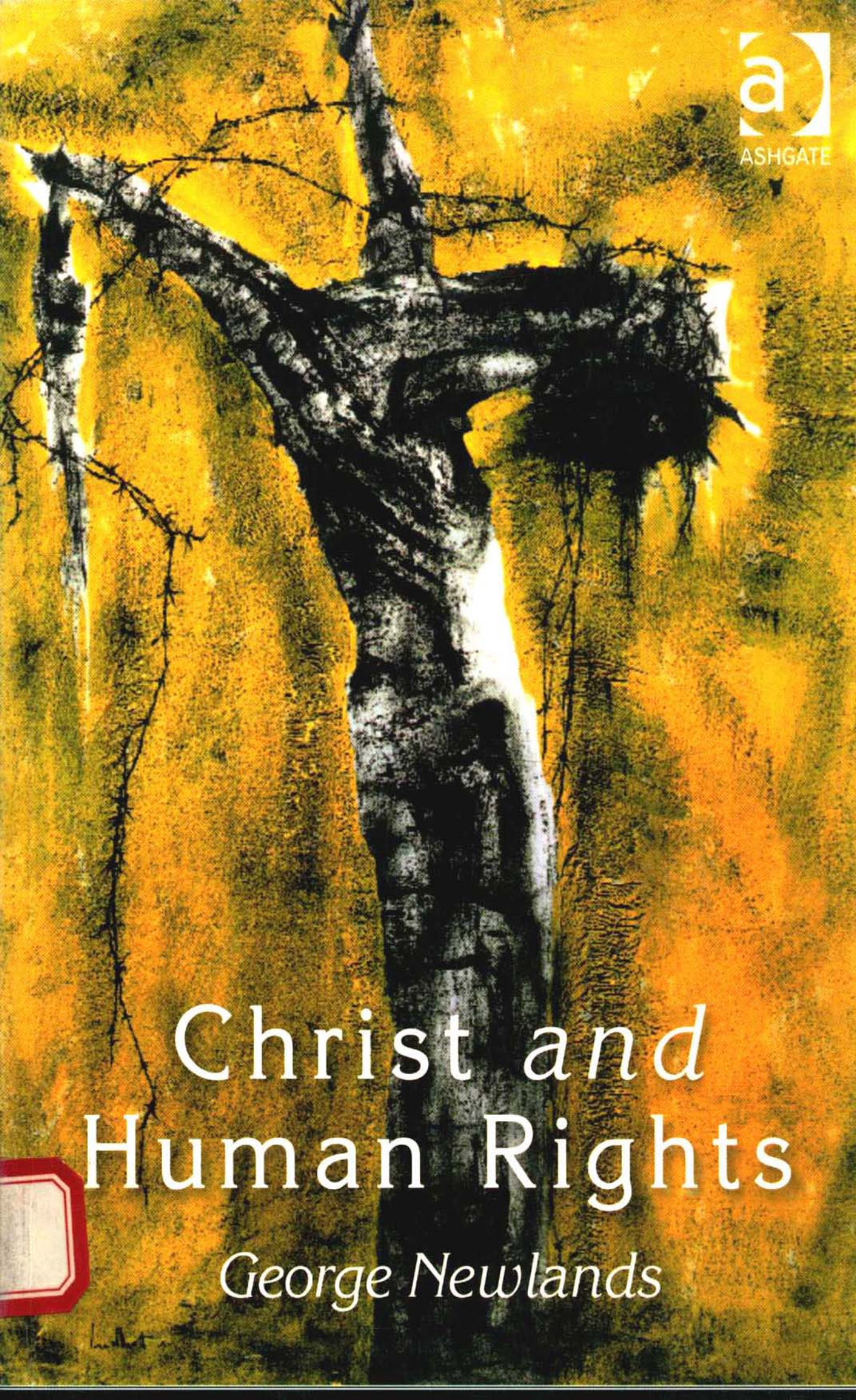
ASHGATE
Christ and Human Rights
George Newlands

Christ and Human Rights

The Transformative Engagement

GEORGE NEWLANDS
University of Glasgow, UK

ASHGATE

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CHRIST AND HUMAN RIGHTS

There is no one who writes with such incision, perceptiveness and constructive irony. This is a book which will speak to readers across both the disciplines and the professions, from academic theologian to Lieutenant-General.

Iain Torrance, President, Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey

In this engaging and lively study, George Newlands seeks to connect distinctive Christological claims with the more universal moral discourse of human rights. In doing so, he outlines important ways in which Christian theological ethics may appropriate secular claims while remaining faithful to its central theme.

David Fergusson, Professor of Divinity, University of Edinburgh

Human rights is one of the most important geopolitical issues in the modern world. Jesus Christ is the centre of Christianity. Yet there exists almost no analysis of the significance of Christology for human rights. This book focuses on the connections. Examination of rights reveals tensions, ambiguities and conflicts.

This book constructs a Christology which centres on a Christ of the vulnerable and the margins. It explores the interface between religion, law, politics and violence, East and West, North and South. The history of the use of sacred texts as 'texts of terror' is examined, and theological links to legal and political dimensions explored. Criteria are developed for action to make an effective difference to human rights enforcement and resolution between cultures and religions on rights.

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Igneous, sedimentary,
conglomerate, metamorphic rock-
strata, in which particular grace,
individual love, decency, endurance,
are traced across the faults.
(Geoffrey Hill, *The Triumph of Love*, 1994LI)

Preface

> Human rights provide no panacea to the world crisis, but they are a critical part of any solution. Religions are not easy allies to engage, but the struggle for human rights cannot be won without them. Witte, 1996, xviii

> Perhaps we should stand, from the start, with the crucified Jesus and the vulnerable God he makes known to us. Placher, 1994,128

> And yet the impressive thing about human rights, it seems to me, is how effectively they have functioned despite all their manifest limitations and obscurities. Yes, the promulgation of human rights, by international institutions, hardly guarantees assent- and even assent hardly guarantees anything in particular. The miracle is how well we have done even without such guarantees. The substance of these rights will indeed always be contested and interpreted; but it doesn't mean that they aren't useful instruments for drawing attention to the many ways in which people are brutal to one another. Appiah, 2005, 264

This book is about Christ and human rights. There is already a huge volume of literature around this area, and it may be useful to say, at the beginning, what this study is about, and what it is not, and why it has been written now. Human beings have been engaged in different forms of charity work since the earliest times, but thinking and action on human rights have only come to prominence in their modern forms. Although the nature of human rights has been, and remains, controversial, there was a widespread recognition in 1945 that basic human norms of conduct had been flagrantly violated by the Nazis and that efforts should be made to prevent a recurrence. Human rights action has been encouraged by both religious and by secular visions. For Christians, human rights notions have been developed in relation to understandings of the relationship between God and humanity. Christian faith understands God centrally through Jesus Christ, as the focus and incarnation of the divine nature as unconditional love. Reflections on the transcendent mystery of Christ are formalized in the discipline of Christology. Christologies are discussed here as ways of engaging with the relationship between faith and human rights issues.

I shall argue that the central Christian doctrine of Christology has much to contribute to a 'thick culture' in which global human rights may be positively advanced. I will address the considerable gap in our knowledge of why Christology has not been able to play a more decisive historical role in this area, and consider how a hermeneutical retrieval of the tradition in the service of the future may be achieved.

Can the understanding of Christ make a significant contribution to the theory and practice of human rights? Are fundamental shifts in Christology needed to maximize the contribution of Christianity to human rights issues? Would the cause of human

rights be better served by detaching it from all religion and ideology? This study examines in depth the historical tensions between the Christian gospel and rights, and the scope and limitations of the language of rights. It seeks to provide concrete proposals for confronting rights issues in contemporary contexts.

The direction of this research tradition follows on from my earlier studies in theology and culture, *Generosity and the Christian Future* (SPCK, 1997), *John and Donald Baillie – Transatlantic Theology,* (Peter Lang, 2002) and *The Transformative Imagination – Rethinking Intercultural Theology* (Ashgate, 2004). I am grateful to numerous friends and colleagues for their support in the writing of this study – perhaps I can mention Richard Amesbury, David Beckett, Brian Blount, Susan Brown, Camille Cook, Chip Dobbs-Allsopp, Bob Dykstra, Keith Ewing, Richard Fenn, David Fergusson, Tim Hughes, Stacy Johnson, Joe Kramp, Bruce McCormack, Bob MacLennan, Ian Markham, Paul Middleton, Pat Miller, David Smith, Mark Taylor, Iain Torrance, Wentzel and Hester Van Huyssteen, David Wall and Nick Wyatt for their friendship and many conversations about human rights issues. My warm thanks are also due to the University of Glasgow for granting me study leave, to the faculty and students of Princeton Theological Seminary for their generous hospitality, and to Elizabeth for checking the typescript and for much else besides.

George Newlands
University of Glasgow
August 2005

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Centrality of Rights

Human rights are perhaps the most important geopolitical concept of the present era. Jesus Christ is the centre of Christian faith. Can the understanding of Christ make a significant contribution to the theory and practice of human rights? Why has Christianity so often been associated with domination rather than justice? Are fundamental shifts in Christology needed to maximize the contribution of Christianity to human rights issues? Would the cause of human rights be better served by detaching it from all religion and ideology? This book examines in depth the historical tensions between the Christian gospel and rights, and the scope and limitations of the language of rights. It seeks to provide concrete proposals for facing rights issues in contemporary contexts.

Christ and Human Rights is a study in theology. It involves issues in ethics, worship, politics and culture. The central strand is the exploration of theological issues. It seems likely that basic theological issues, as well as political and cultural issues, lie at the root of much practice in this field. Negotiating these issues where they continue to divide, respecting difference while maintaining dialogue, remains central to movement on rights issues. This study seeks, in the first instance, neither to condemn nor to defend the churches' record on human rights issues, but to understand the context in which decisions and actions that may seem incomprehensible today occurred. On that basis, it should then be possible to suggest specific contributions for the present. Nevertheless, whatever progress we can make today, future generations will no doubt conclude that we still had much to learn about human rights in the twenty-first century.[1]

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1 John Langan has produced an excellent summary of the relationships of human rights to Christian Ethics (in Biggar *et al.*, 1986, 119ff.) in his article 'Human Rights Theory: A Basis for Pluralism_Open to Christian Ethics'. He highlights ways in which Christian ethics can complement or challenge human rights theory:

1. It can stress the limited and instrumental character of many human rights
   'The point of exercising HR is to enable us to act rightly and to achieve our human (and Christian) destiny in a humane way.'
2. It can stress the full range of human rights as against partial and reductive conceptions of humanity.
3. It can provide links between symbols and histories of a particular religious tradition and the universal values and claims of human rights theory.
4 It can deepen the sense of history and the sense of community, both of which are often left in obscurity or taken for granted in liberal forms of human rights theory.
5. The Christian ethical tradition, through its emotionally powerful symbols and the reality of the common life from which it grows, can contribute motivation and commitment to the long, uneven struggle for the realization of human rights in our world. This struggle by

Many, perhaps most, Christians have no experience of discrimination or even friends who have been discriminated against – churches have long abandoned the practice of burning witches. There are also vivid examples of counterdiscrimination, when people adopt an aggressive victim status in order to dominate others and distort reality. But, still, there are huge numbers of victims of human rights abuses in the world – even, sadly, within the churches themselves.[2]

It must be said at the outset that there is nothing self-evident about the role of Christ in the advocacy of human rights. On the one hand, it may be said that Christ has nothing to do with rights; on the other, it can so be argued that, historically, Christ has been a figure used to counter human rights – notably racism, slavery and the emancipation of women – and that this is a perfectly legitimate theological interpretation. I shall suggest that this is a misunderstanding of the centre of the faith and will further argue that Jesus Christ is the basis for an urgent Christian support of human rights. Against the more bleak record may be placed the impressive work undertaken by many different sorts of Christian NGOs in alleviating poverty and suffering in the contemporary world.

Christianity is embedded in community. Churches, like other bodies, have, and have had, a complex relationship with human rights. Christian churches and Christian thinkers have made contributions to human rights issues and human rights actions. There was, for example, a decisive Christian input to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights in 1945, and, especially between 1975 and 1985, churches were active in promoting human rights, abandoning their earlier stance of suspicion and joining in a widespread, and to a large extent American-led, drive for universal human rights. During this period there was frequent dialogue with non-church bodies, and it became common to speak of first-, second- and third-generation rights issues, moving from individual freedoms to economic and social and then to global and environmental rights.

There have also been several new and different waves of anti-rights sentiments. Within and outside the churches – in legal studies, in politics, in theology and elsewhere – objections to rights issues and rights culture have arisen, some with traditional and some with more recent roots. The Marxist critique of liberal Western rights talk made churches cautious about endorsing what might be seen as bourgeois values. The word 'liberal' became deeply suspect in many areas of discourse.[3] Churches were inevitably concerned to distance themselves from a politicisation of rights which served some interests but not others. The linking of humanitarian, political and global strategic aims by nation-states could be positively damaging to human rights work on the ground by NGOs, including churches. Equally, churches

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Christians is to be sustained through sharing in the mystery of life and death of the Christ who came that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

2 A new resource is *The Journal of Hate Studies*, produced by Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA: see www.gonzaga.edu/against hate. The Christian Identity federation is a good example of what is often a deadly combination of hate and reactionary religion.

3 'I'm telling you, it's a sick, sick nation that turned the word ' "liberal" into an expletive' (Iain Banks, 2002, 204).

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might be deeply reluctant to expose their own internal structures, social arrangements and lines of authority to human rights scrutiny. Here, traditional assumptions about the independence and autonomy of churches from human scrutiny – old and outdated privileges – are conveniently recalled. On a worldwide frame theology and church have moved further away from patterns of liberal dialogue towards patterns of communitarian affirmation and evangelical affirmation yet the more serious question always remained: do Christians have rights and should they talk of, and exercise rights in discipleship to a God who, in Christ, is an utterly self-giving, self-dispossessing God?

In brief, all these movements were to lead – with due exceptions as always – in the present day (2005) to a marked decline in the momentum of Christian reflection on human rights. In some respects, this may be welcomed. The point has been made; there is no longer an issue. Christian communities do in fact work effectively everywhere for humanitarian causes and for the prevention of injustice – through the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development), Christian Aid, the Tear Fund and so on. After a scholarly contest to triumph in being the most non-triumphalist, it becomes clear that many church traditions have contributed to human rights talk, although most have, at the same time, inhibited human rights action. Rights talk can never be seen as a trump card in complex conversations. Rhetoric and advocacy have both positive and negative effects. Some discussions benefit from moratorium.

And yet it is always unwise to assume that, because points have been made, there is no more to be done. The history of black people in North America shows how apparent victories easily dissolve into the former unacceptable status quo. The history of Jewish people in Europe shows how apparent assimilation and general acceptance can be followed by swift and brutal annihilation. The world of post-9/11 is marked by growing religious fundamentalisms of different colours, and these are unlikely to disappear soon. Marginalized communities can rarely afford to be entirely complacent, discrimination against individuals is a fact of everyday life, and positive benefits such as adequate food are denied to a large portion of the world's population. The continuing energetic encouragement of a critical, carefully constructed human rights culture may be an inadequate strategy, *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is one which, I shall argue, all societies should be encouraged to continue to pursue vigilantly. It is a goal on which Christians, as disciples of a loving God, should be consistently and determinedly focused at all times.

Christian faith does not come to the meeting place of dialogue and engagement on human rights as a white knight with a spotless record. It comes as flawed and often disgraced. Yet innumerable individuals and communities have made tremendous concrete contributions to rights issues, very often through anonymous self-sacrifice in forgotten places, and church voices played a central role in the genesis of the 1945 UN Charter. Rights are an issue where persistence in taking small steps remains imperative, whatever the setbacks and challenges.

Why Do Human Rights Matter?

Put simply, human rights matter because they can inspire action to diminish man's inhumanity to man, to discourage the torture, genocide and other manifest evils which remain a continuing and endemic feature of human society. From a Christian standpoint, human rights issues are related intimately to central concepts of the gospel, to the understanding of humanity before God, to righteousness and justice. They embrace considerations of mercy, reconciliation and hospitality, and they focus on the treatment of the marginalized and of strangers. For Christians, they stem from the understanding of Christ as the centre of forgiveness, reconciliation and generosity.

What *are* human rights and do they exist? These questions are the subject of continuing debate. When I use the term 'human rights', I shall be trying to speak about a human ability to enjoy certain basic capacities which are constitutive of human living – the ability to survive and to enjoy reasonable health and freedom of action, to express one's views without hindrance, to associate with other people without arbitrary constraints and without fear of torture or detention. All highly debateable issues, you might say. They are. And shouldn't we also be talking about human responsibilities, or human wrongs rather than human rights? Well, perhaps. But as it has been appositely said:

> Outside the cocooned world of the academy, people are still victims of torture, still subjected to genocide, still deprived of basic freedoms and still dying through starvation. We should remember these people before we decide to forget about rights. (Jones, 1994, 227)

What are the relations between ethics, Christian ethics and Christology? In a nutshell, ethics is concerned with the development of critical theories of conduct, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable, and the comparative analysis of these different theories. Morality is the negotiation and implementation of codes of behaviour in practice. Christian ethics seeks to make a contribution to ethical theory and its practical consequences for morality, in the light of the Christian faith. Christology as the exploration of the nature of God's action in Jesus Christ is at the centre of faith, encouraging a Christomorphic view of the world. As such, it is pivotal to Christian views of the ethical dilemmas flagged up in the language and practice of human rights. Although Christian ethics has wider sources than Christology, in that it draws on the whole biblical tradition, the tradition of the Christian community and contemporary social and philosophical reflection, this study will centre on the Christological matrix, because it is paradoxically at once absolutely central and often thought to be at the root of Christian blindness to human rights issues through the centuries.

Although there is endless debate over their grounds and justification, human rights, as embodied in law, are not mysterious or difficult to grasp. For example, the British Human Rights Act of 1998, enacting European legislation into Scottish and English law, has 14 articles. The first article declares that the state must respect the rights set

out in the articles. The second states that everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. The third prohibits torture or degrading treatment. The fourth prohibits slavery or forced labour. The fifth guarantees the right to personal liberty and security. The sixth ensures the right to a fair trial. The seventh ensures no punishment without a relevant law. The eighth concerns respect for privacy and family life. The remainder cover: freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 9); freedom of expression (Art.10); freedom of assembly and association (Art.11); the right to marry and to found a family (Art. 12); the right to an effective remedy (Art. 13); and freedom from discrimination in any of the issues mentioned in the other articles (Art.14). Additional protocols cover the right to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions, to education and to free elections, and reiterate the abolition of the death penalty. The interpretation of these rights, however, is a matter of continuing legal debate and development.

It seems clear that human rights will continue to be of central importance to our human future. Prohibitions against genocide, murder, slavery, torture, prolonged arbitrary imprisonment and systematic racial discrimination will always be important for human flourishing. Human rights theory will remain subject to healthy debate and constructive disagreement in all its dimensions.[4] If it is to be implemented effectively, it will have to be related to wider cultural frameworks. For some people, this means being embedded in a secular culture, without all the traditional divisiveness of religious commitment. For others in many parts of the world, it will mean engagement with religion as an integral part of culture.

Christian theology is unable to take a purist stance on this debate. The Christian gospel implies commitment to dialogue both with the secular and the religious. Both perspectives have important insights into the human condition, and both are open to distortion and abuse. We can use neither our human rights theory nor our religious commitment as a trump card. Rather, we must seek to draw benefit for humanity from a web of connections and a number of different theories in order to work together with others to deliver practical outcomes in human rights – freedom from coercion and conditions for the reality of human flourishing.

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4 There are good reasons for this constructive disagreement, which we shall explore throughout this study. Cf. especially Appiah (2005, ch 6, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism', 212ff).

> Practically speaking, we do not resolve disagreements in principle about why we want to save this child from drowning if, in fact, we agree that this child must be saved. But what if you believe that the child is meant to die because an ancestor has called her, and I do not?
>
> I want to suggest that there was something wrong with the original picture of how dialogue should be grounded. It was based on the idea that we must find points of agreement at the level of principle: here is human nature; here is what human nature dictates. What we learn from efforts at actual intercultural dialogue – what we learn from travel, but also from poems or novels, or films from other places – is that we can identify points of agreement that are much more local and contingent than this. (Appiah, 2005, 253)

Appiah advocates a 'metaphysical ecumenism, responsive to the moral vocabularies we find on the ground' (2005, 267).

> We needn't be unduly troubled by the fact that metaphysical debate is unlikely to produce consensus, because human rights can, and therefore should, be sustained without metaphysical consensus. (Ibid.)

Whilst human rights are one of the most important geopolitical issues in the modern world, systematic theological attention to the subject, though significant, has been very limited. Moreover, given the history of persecution in the name of Christ, Christology may seem an unlikely catalyst for such dialogue. Yet Jesus Christ has always been the centre of Christianity, and I believe that it should be possible to put reflection on Christ at the centre of a research project on human rights. Christian ethics shares in all human ethical concerns. But the character of Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection colours all Christian thinking about rights, duties, justice and the whole spectrum of overlapping concerns., Paradoxically, it may be that the very ambiguity of the Christian response to Christ in the area of human rights over the centuries can help us better understand the choices which we are called to make. That would, of course, correspond to a central feature of Donald Baillie's famous *God was in Christ* (1948), the paradox of grace.

It is precisely in the particularity of Christ that we are invited to share in the universality of the concerns of other world religions and of humanist ethical endeavour. The paradox extends further. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is centrally relevant to all aspects of human life. Yet the more we are inclined to use Christology to produce instant solutions to human rights issues, the less success we are likely to have. It is likely to be more profitable to see the Christian framework as a perspective of eschatological hope, a vision of the peace of God, and to work towards this with as much patience and modesty as we can find. Henri Nouwen's notion of *The Wounded Healer* (1972), though of limited application, may be relevant to the role of Christian community in reinforcing rights culture in society.

Why are human rights so important? The reasons are, at a basic level, quite simple. In the twenty-first century, large numbers of people continue to be abused, tortured and murdered. Large numbers continue to die of hunger and disease when the resources are there to prevent this. Large numbers suffer from all kinds of discrimination to a degree that is serious enough to damage their lives in quite unnecessary ways. Despite giant strides in human social progress, descent into barbarism seems as easy in our current century as it has ever been. Action needs to be taken constantly to reduce and prevent these evils. This, at least, is agreed by most people today, even if they may not always avoid aspects of discrimination, large or small, themselves. It seems, too, that human rights are likely to remain central to any work on global ethics.[5]

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5 There is a very useful overview of recent human rights writing in Little (1999, 151f). In addition, David Little's definitions on human rights, in his essay 'The Nature and Basis of Human Rights' (1993, 73ff) are especially useful:

> Since a human right is a complex idea with moral, legal and other aspects, we must make some preliminary clarifications. Given that a 'right' *simpliciter* is an entitlement to demand a certain performance or forbearance on pain of sanction for non-compliance; that a 'moral right' is a right regarded as authoritative in that it takes precedence over other action, and is legitimate in part for considering the welfare of others, and that a 'legal right' is warranted and enforced within a legal system, a 'human right' then, is understood as having the following five characteristics, according to the prevailing 'human rights vocabulary'.

Much else remains controversial and highly contested. The nature of human rights, their scope and how to achieve them, how to negotiate conflicts of rights, how to create the political climate in which rights may be best achieved, how to deal with diverse combinations of rights talk with other ideals, often of a conflicting nature – all of this is the subject of continuing debate. Often, difficult practical decisions have to be made, and are decided on an ad hoc basis. It is important that Christian perspectives should be fed into reflection at an early stage, as a contribution to the framework in which decisions are taken.

Human rights talk may be distinguished, but not entirely separated, from other social and political considerations. We have seen nations use human rights as a weapon of propaganda against other nations with which they are in dispute on other grounds. States may stop talking about rights when this could embarrass allies, invite the publicity of countercharges or politically liberate people whose views could be uncongenial. The experience of Amnesty International has been a history of dealing with such complexity and seeking to avoid being used for extraneous political reasons. Talk of human rights does not take away the need for politics and diplomacy, or that for wider reflection on citizenship: it is only one avenue, albeit an important one, to social communicative action. As communication changes – most recently through the Internet – rights issues develop new and unexpected dimensions.[6]

If human rights are so very important to human well-being, then it is clearly incumbent on all traditions of thought and action, religious or non-religious, which believe they have a distinctive contribution to make to the human future, to engage seriously with rights issues. For Christianity this involves theology and practice. Since Christology is at the centre of Christianity, it should be engaged in this process.

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1. It is a moral right advanced as a legal right. It should, as we pointed out earlier, 'be protected by the rule of law' thus constituting a standard for the conduct of government and the administration of force.
2. It is regarded as protecting something of indispensable human importance.
3. It is ascribed 'naturally', which is to say that it is not earned or achieved, nor is it disallowed by virtue of race, creed, ethnic origin or gender.
4. Some human rights can be forfeited or suspended under prescribed conditions (for example,. a public emergency), but several 'primary' or basic rights are considered indefeasible under any circumstances.
5. It is universally claimable by (or on behalf of) all people against all (appropriately situated) others, or by (or on behalf of) certain generic categories of people, such as 'women' or 'children'. Those who are appropriately subject to such claims are said to have 'correlative human duties'.

6 The Internet provides new resources of Human Rights action. In *Human Rights and the Internet* (Hick *et al.*, 2000) there are excellent discussions of the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet in the fight against human rights violations. These include the possibilities of wider communication, the dangers of hate sites (ibid., 141), the battle between human rights groups and oppressive governments attempting to hack into their websites (illustrated in relation to East Timor (ibid.,133ff)), the problems of protecting children and the need, on occasion, for encryption software such as PGP (Pretty Good Privacy). There are useful lists of human rights resources on the Internet (ibid.,100ff, 117ff), including Oneworld.org, OCMT (the World Organization Against Torture) and so on.

Currently there is remarkably little extant literature on Christology and human rights. There may be good reasons for the gap. Although the connections are inescapable in theory, making the appropriate ones may not be easy. But it must at least be both possible and desirable to take steps towards an ongoing task.

There are, however, important areas of reflection and practice which overlap with both Christology and human rights. These include humanity before God, righteousness and justice, mercy, reconciliation, and hospitality. Christ is often seen in the Christian tradition as the centre of forgiveness and generosity, of commitment to marginality, to specific sorts of strangers. It will be part of this project to draw together these webs of connection.[7]

Here, I need to sound a note of caution. It would be unwise to imagine that even a widespread agreement on the main characteristics of human rights will in itself solve the many human rights problems in contemporary society. We have noted that societies, groups and individuals are often notoriously selective in the ways in which they espouse human rights issues. This selectivity is seen in the disagreements on rights between Eastern and Western states during the Cold War, and between North and South. Churches and other religious organizations enthusiastically and piously support human rights causes in faraway countries while continuing to discriminate systematically against members of their own communities at home. In reaction

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7 An excellent deployment of webs of connections is made in Ian Markham's *A Theology of Engagement* (2003), a study devoted to the dialogue between Christian thought and action and other traditions, religious and secular, in contemporary society. Inclusion is a keyword in the engagement process. Engagement is to be understood as 'an encounter that subsequently shapes the theology itself' (Markham. 2003, 10). It is described more closely, as: assimilation – the constructive use of categories from non-Christian sources; resistance – the ability to reject sources as incompatible with the heart of the Christian tradition; and overhearing – the process of illumination from discussion within another religious tradition. Assimilation as a process has been valuable even when the content remains subject to critique. Resistance leads to precision in expression and has characterized the development of doctrines of the incarnation.

Assimilation is deployed by Markham in engagement with human rights, enabling theology to negotiate – an issue on which the church has a very chequered record. Resistance may also enable the defence of human rights, illustrated through resistance to the concept of the sovereign state, with reference to Austria, Kosovo and Chile. God is more basic to humanity than the state. Resistance points to a human rights construction of theological engagement with black and feminist issues. Markham is characteristically trenchant: 'I take the oppression of women by men as given. Christian theology has at its most benign treated women as invisible; and at its most wicked, it has provided a justification for this cruelty' (ibid., 87–8). Repentance and modification of the tradition are urgently needed. Similar conditions apply in the development of black theology.

Markham returns to overhearing, examining the clash of discourses concerning the secular, in the West and in India. He considers the ramifications of Hindu nationalism through the eyes of Chandhoke and Chatterjee. Here, religious sensibilities and group rights have to be respected. This leads to further reflection on Hinduism, inclusivity and toleration. Beyond this there is need of an inclusive cultural vision in which the economic consensus around capitalism may be humanely articulated. This is focused on the response to globalization. Complexity and ambiguity may be revelatory (ibid., 187).

We turn to the shape of an engaged theology: 'So the theologian needs to be both in the middle and on the edge' – centred in the believing community but 'forcing the community to listen to the truth of God as it is in non-Christian traditions' (ibid., 209).

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