



Imagining the Human through Culture, Religions, Christ

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I. IMAGE AND CULTURE

“Created...in the image of God” (Gen 1:27). Those simple words unite our three-fold theme—culture, religions, and Christ. It is hoped that they will also stir our imaginations as they did that of Paul.

We live in a culture that delights in its imaginations of what it is to be human. One vision after another parades before our eyes as we turn on “Good Morning America,” listen to the newscasters local and national, marvel at the muppets, watch commercials, glance at the *National Review* as we stand at the checkout counter, notice the recently changed billboard, laugh at Dick Tracy, or glue ourselves by eye or ear to our favorite sport. What civilization has had a better opportunity for imagining the human than our own? We imagine the whole range—from the dignified (Mandela) to the silly (Trump).

“Created...in the image of God.” How does this invite us to imagine the human? To speak of “the image” “specifies a relation.” Joseph Sittler puts it this way:

Reality is known only in relations....There is no ontology of isolated entities....The only adequate ontological structure we may utilize for thinking things Christianly is an ontology of community, communion, ecology....”Being itself” may be a relation, not an entiative thing.¹

Claus Westermann agrees. God “created a creature that corresponds to him, to whom he can speak, and who can hear him.” Thus, the “creation of man² in God’s image is directed to something happening between God and man.”³ The setting for this happening is human social life (created male and female) and the human

¹Joseph Sittler, “Ecological Commitment as Theological Responsibility,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 5 (1970) 174.

²When citing others I will normally use their own terminology, even if unnecessarily gender specific.

³Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 58.

relation with nature (have dominion). With this biblical perspective as our clue, let us begin to imagine the human in the light of culture, religions, and Christ.

Culture is the act of our imaging, the fulfillment of our Genesis vocation, the mirror of our being. Culture, as Geertz for one suggests, is the webs of significance which we spin,⁴ and it is these spun webs that enable us to communicate, to relate, to participate in each other’s life and

in the life of nature. Like spiders we are attached to our own webs;⁵ but unlike spiders, “in the image” means that the human creature is destined to communicate across and through these webs.

We spin these webs in three great arcs. There is the material arc, the linguistic arc, and the social arc. Cultures are nothing if not modest or massive attempts to manage nature—we fish and farm and eat and build homes and cities and make clothes and develop communication systems with roads and wires and cars and planes and satellites and make medicines to secure health and... Our first encounter with any culture is through its *material* face, the way it has made use of nature. Cultures are also *linguistic* ventures. Through language, literature, art, tradition, music, dance, and a host of other symbolic forms we give expression to a world of meaning. Thirdly, cultures are *social* adventures. There is family, community, political state, and institutions of unnumbered kinds. In all of these life is nurtured, values shaped, decisions made.

As linguistic ventures cultures are above all imaginative ventures. It is here that new possibilities are imagined in myth, story, song, and art. Imagination is the ability to deal with the unseen, with the absent, with that which is not directly given to the senses. We don't have to imagine snow; we can see it, if we live in Minnesota. We don't have to imagine each other; we can see each other, unless we are absent from each other because of time (through death, for instance) or space (there, not here). When absent from each other we need to imagine. Imagination makes it possible to deal with that which is categorically or logically different from us—God, for instance.⁶ It is the human imaginative venture, particularly in its religious form and as it imagines what it is to be human, to which we wish to draw attention in this essay.

II. IMAGINING THE HUMAN

It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that we live in a multi-cultural, plurally religious world. It is now shouted to us from nearly every quarter. Rather than merely remind ourselves of an obvious fact, let us take account of the possibilities it gives to us. How, for instance, is the human imagined in our plural religious world? What follows is only one “for instance”; it is by no means comprehensive.

Let us look at how the human is imagined at three points that coincide with our analysis of culture above: the human world and the natural world; the human social world; the human world of final meaning. In so doing, we will particularly explore religious imaginations, taking religion to be “some belief as to what

⁴Clifford Geertz's definition of culture in terms of meaning is here combined with an operational or praxis-oriented concern. On Geertz see *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 7.

⁵I owe this image to Roger Andriatsiratahina, “Church Empowerment for Cultural and Political Awareness” (Master's thesis, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, 1990) 55.

⁶See Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology & the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 65.

the world is *like*”⁷ and the commitment commensurate with that belief. Religion is the way we imagine the whole and live out that imagination.

1. Nature and the Human

Pannenberg proposes to develop an anthropology in which biological fact and theological insight are taken with equal seriousness. If he is to do so it is necessary to ground theological discussion in the prior scientific discussion of the human which takes human biological givenness as its exclusive province. Theology, Pannenberg would say, must presuppose the human *connection* with nature before it talks about the human *difference* from nature. This is in fact an almost universal phenomenon in religion. Some religious imaginations stress the difference, others the connection; but none dismiss the connection. The connection, of course, is clearly stated in the Bible: “God formed *adam* of dust from the ground” (Gen 2:7).

Buddhism is a good case in point of a religion that imagines the *connection*. In makeup the human is no different from other realms of nature, all of which involve the interplay of varied kinds of forces. There are of course different kinds of beings, from mere physical presences (like stones), to vital presences (like trees), to sentient presences (like animals). It is the sentient realm that particularly interests the Buddhist. Humans are simply one particular form that sentient presence takes, having no ontological priority over the animal world. Indeed, spirits and gods or God are merely further instances of the same sentient presence, though progressively more ethereal in makeup. Buddhism shares with Hindu thought the same doctrine of transmigration. In such a vision the whole sentient universe, from God at its pinnacle to the denizens of hell at its nadir, is one interrelated process with no fixed boundaries. In our pre-enlightened state gods become humans, humans gods, or both become animals or animals both. So it goes round and round with various categories of spirits, demons, and denizens of hell as well. Such talk of transmigration perhaps sounds strange to our ears.⁸ In its favor, however, we can say at least this: it states in a mythic temporal mode what is certainly true at the logical level—humans are dust, of nature, deeply connected to all of reality. Indeed, if we take a doctrine of divine immanence at all seriously, God, too, is implicated in the material universe. The Buddhist injunction against the taking of life (their basic commandment is not just against taking human life!) and their vegetarian diet are evidence that they take the connection, if anything, more seriously than does the Christian.

Yet for the Buddhist this connection is not affirmed for its own sake. There is a difference that makes the human world uniquely significant. One way of putting this is to say that the human world is a “mixed” environment that makes a unique kind of freedom possible. In the divine realm everything is so pleasant and happy that little occasion is given to sense responsibility for one’s action. The realm of happiness is a realm of arbitrary, unhindered indulgence. In the realms which are so to speak “beneath” the human, limitation and hardship are so severe that there is little capacity to be aware of one’s state and take responsibility for one’s destiny. Only in the mixed realm of the human world is there both impetus and the leisure to reflect upon one’s state and take active and responsible measures to seek

⁷Ibid., 77.

⁸Note, however, John Hick’s defense of transmigration in *Death and Eternal Life* (New York: Harper, 1976) and Hans Küng’s discussion in *Christianity and the World Religions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986) 230-239.

necessary change.⁹ Were the limitations overly severe and the freedom overly indulgent the

ability to assume responsible action would also disappear. This mixed environment creates the conditions for enlightenment regarding the depth of our connectedness and the truth of our dependent origination.

The Daoist imagination takes the connection at least as seriously. This might be illustrated by a reworked myth, which can properly be called in its revised form an “anti-creation” myth. It is about *shu* and *hu*, whom we may simply call “Mr. Impetuosity” and “Mr. Carelessness,” and a certain *hundun*¹⁰ who is a kind of cosmic blob, a bit of unformed nature. It reads:

The Emperor of the South was called Shu. The Emperor of the North was called Hu. And the Emperor of the Center was called Hundun. Shu and Hu at times mutually came together and met in Hundun’s territory. Hundun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu then discussed how they could reciprocate Hundun’s virtue, saying: “People all have seven openings in order to see, hear, eat, and breathe. Hundun alone doesn’t have any. Let’s try boring some.” Each day they bored one hole, and on the seventh day Hundun died.¹¹

The intended kindness of these erstwhile friends of our cosmic blob proved in the end to be destructive. By boring eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth they destroyed Hundun’s original vitality.

Like all good myths this one is open to a variety of interpretations.¹² Clearly one possible interpretation is to see it as commenting on the double nature of human beings from their constitution, on the one hand, from the primordial stuff of nature, and on the other, as beings with mind and reason. Between these aspects of nature and reason there is too often a ready conflict. The attempt to deny our primordial nature results in self-destruction. We are connected with nature, and this is the primordial basis upon which everything we are and do is grounded.

2. *The Social Experience of Being Human*

When the attention in a religion is given to the social experience of humankind, the tendency is to stress the difference of the human from nature in its mineral, vegetable, and animal basis. Thus, when Pannenberg seeks to articulate the distinctiveness of being human in purely anthropological terms, he appeals to the distinction between “centrism” and “exocentrism.” By the former he means that as biologically determined we have an innate tendency to experience everything in terms of our own biological, sensory, or psychological necessity. As biological animals we are innately self-centered beings. However, the uniqueness of the human species is that, while grounded on this biological base, we are inherently social beings, properly constituted as human in the capacity to experience ourselves not merely from our biological center but from the perspective of others—exocentrically. This begins to happen in the very earliest development of the infant.¹³

⁹For one interpretation of this mixed realm upon which I base these comments, see Wan Jung-ch’eng, “Yi jen-lei wei pen ti fo-fa,” *Chung-kuo fo-chiao* 30.12 (1986) 25-29.

¹⁰With a food radical added to the Chinese character it is simply the wonton (*hundun* in Mandarin) that one eats in one’s wonton soup.

¹¹*Chuangzi*, chapter 7. Cited with slight alterations from N. J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (hun-tun)* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983) 81.

¹²Joseph Needham, for instance, gives it a political interpretation in *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 2 of *History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1962) 112.

The result is to move us away from a naturalistic understanding of the human to a moral one, a move which the Confucian tradition exemplifies. Confucian anthropology, while by no means denying the connection, is founded upon the assumption of the difference between the animal and the human. As Mencius epigrammatically put it, “that wherein humans differ from the birds and beasts is slight.” As with animals, observes Xunzi, it is “the nature of humans that when they are hungry they will desire satisfaction, when they are cold they will desire warmth, and when they are weary they will desire rest”¹⁴ (Pannenberg’s centrism). But unlike animals, humans have the innate capacity for social and moral behavior. This *slight* difference opens up into the vast vista of the human moral project.

We have no intention of propounding a Confucian anthropology here, but will be content with a few brief comments. Mencius fills out what he means by the “slight difference” in his theory of the “four fonts.” Even a thief, it might be observed, upon seeing a toddler about to tumble into a well, will, in spite of all his or her bad character, rush to the rescue. This sense of commiseration is the font of love. Similarly, all have a sense of shame and dislike, which is the font of righteousness; all have a sense of modesty and yielding, which is the font of proper behavior; all have a sense of right and wrong, which is the beginning of wisdom. Were people “to give them their full development and completion,...the result will be like fire that begins to burn, or a spring that has begun to find vent.”¹⁵ All of this is to say that we are exocentrically constituted.

The Confucian is committed to an insistent social and moral reading of human nature. This leads to a vision that connects the individual to the entire socio-political order. The vision goes something like this. Only where there is the person of virtue (for example, the one who allows the four fonts of goodness to extend and inform her or his whole behavior) will the family be rightly ordered, and only when families are rightly ordered will the nation be rightly governed, and only when the nations are rightly governed will there be universal peace (*tianxia ping*).¹⁶

According to this view, the human moral realm is envisioned as a series of concentric circles. At the most intimate level is the exocentric individual person who exists as an individual within the matrix of relationships with parents, siblings, friends, teachers, or rulers. In this matrix of relationships the individual cultivates appropriate attitudes and behavior that foster the growth of those moral initiatives embedded in the mind rather than give sway to the passions and prejudices of one’s biologically-rooted emotional life. As wind sweeps over the prairies bending the grass before it,¹⁷ so these moral initiatives will then flow out into the wider circles of life until even political life becomes a sphere of harmony and mutual enhancement.

Because the Buddhist and Daoist, on the other hand, stress the connection with nature, this shows up in their less energetic concern for the social. The Buddha, like monks still today, left wife and infant son for the reclusive life, an act which is the

¹⁴For a further discussion of Confucian anthropology, see my book *A Theology of World Religions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987) 45-59 as well as elsewhere throughout the book.

¹⁵Mencius 2a.6. For a fuller translation of the passage see D. Howard Smith, *Chinese Religions from 1000 B.C. to the Present Day* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1968) 50.

¹⁶See *The Great Learning* (Daxue).

¹⁷*Analects* 12.19.

very antithesis of Confucian concern for ancestral veneration and the rule of our social connectedness. Likewise, the Daoist, while not given to celibacy since the vital forces of nature are taken so seriously, nevertheless retreats from the onrush of life for reclusive quiet. When Zhuangzi was urged to use his talents for human welfare in the political realm, he chose rather to describe himself as a turtle, happy in his little mud puddle. Why should he leave off doing what is natural and like the Confucian devote himself to unnatural social engineering?

3. *Human Experience of the Other*

The third area of human culture we wish to touch upon is its linguistic side, that rich symbolic capacity of cultures. Religion, we might say, explores the symbolic capacity of culture at its profoundest. Pannenberg speaks of this as a third move,¹⁸ the move from an anthropological doctrine of human exocentrism, affirmed by psychology and sociology, to a theological understanding of this exocentrism as a relationship to God. It is a “leap,” a leap from an “openness of the human being to the world” which implies an ultimate “openness to what is beyond the world,” to “an intuition of divine reality.”¹⁹ In religious theism this becomes thematic.

In considering the nature/human relationship we saw that Daoism and Buddhism tended to stress the connection, while Confucianism tended to stress the difference. In considering the human/human relationship we saw that Confucianism now stresses the connection, the exocentrism or the social formation of the human individual. But there are also traditions that tend to stress the difference, seeing connection in the light of the difference, rather than the other way around. Koyama states this in a particularly clear way. He observes that “Asian spirituality appreciates discontinuity against the background of continuity. Here the subtle emphasis is that continuity gives meaning to discontinuity.” His primary reference is to Shinto, but it applies to Daoism and Buddhism as well, and also to Confucianism on the social level. That is to say, in the spiritualities of “connection” the discontinuities of life—sickness, death, war, pain, as well as positive discontinuities such as joy, success—are absorbed by and given meaning through the larger continuities of life’s ongoing rhythms—the continuing cycles of nature, the perpetual connection with the ancestors, the recurrences that always modulate the extreme by restoring once again the “golden mean.” He then goes on: “In biblical spirituality, on the contrary, it is discontinuity that gives meaning to continuity.”²⁰ In the spirituality of “difference” it is the discontinuities of creation, fall, exodus, giving of the Torah, prophetic judgment, exile or renewed promise that give meaning to the continuity, in this case, of Israel’s identity.

To be human in community, therefore, is not only to be connected with each other, but to be *other* to each other. Contemporary Western philosophy is making a particularly strong case for this—the otherness of the other. In theistic traditions, above all, this otherness is given profound depth in the experience of God. Let us illustrate.

Because of Israel’s disobedience, God threatened to depart from her. Greatly

¹⁸The first being an affirmation of the connectedness with nature, the second, a locating of the distinctively human in exocentricity, and the third, the openness of this exocentric being to the ultimate horizon we thematize as God.

¹⁹Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 69.

²⁰Kosuke Koyama, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A Critique of Idols* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984) 12.

troubled, Moses pleads with God not to do so, and asks for a sign of God's favor. His blunt request is "Show your glory" (Exod 33:11-23). God obliges Moses. "I will make all my goodness pass before you," God informs Moses, "and will proclaim before you my name....But you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." God then tells Moses to hide in a cleft of the rock and says, "I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

Here there is a powerful sense of strangeness, or otherness. God's presence must be handled very carefully, else it would be destructive. We do not know how dramatic the passing by of God was for Moses. It could have been like the Elijah experience in which earthquake and fire was followed by "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:9-18). It certainly had the potential to be dramatic like that of the Hindu hero Arjuna.

In this case, according to the *Bhagavadgita*, Arjuna too is driven to request Krishna to show his divine self. "Fain would I see the form of You as *Lord*."²¹ Arjuna too is warned of the danger. "Never will you be able to see Me with this your [natural] eye. A celestial eye I'll give to you, behold my power...as Lord!"

It is an awesome experience. Arjuna calls out terror struck: "I see your mouths with jagged, ghastly tusks reminding [me] of Time's [devouring] fire: I cannot find my bearing, I cannot find a refuge; have mercy, God of gods, home of the universe!" Finally he pleads, "Tell me, who are You, your form so cruel? Homage to You, You best of gods, have mercy! Fain would I know You as You are in the beginning, for what You are set on doing I do not understand." Krishna yields to Arjuna's distressful plea and resumes his familiar human form, telling him that the only way of relating to God is "by worship-of-love addressed to [Me]."

For the theistic traditions, this experience of radical otherness lies at the root of all experience of relatedness on both the social and natural levels. Embedded in the depth of our connectedness is a yet deeper difference, a categorical difference, a difference named God. But it is not sheer difference. The theophanies related above make that clear. There is a connection, but what is that connection?

Well, it depends. In many ways the Hebrew and Hindu stories seem so similar. Are they then the same? Yet, we note that Hinduism blatantly violates the injunction against making graven images (Exod 20:4-5). Hardly anything is more characteristic of Israel's religion than this injunction. Hardly anything is more characteristic of Hinduism than image worship. Mark Twain had his comments to make when he visited India: "And what a swarm of them there is! The town is a vast museum of idols—and all of them crude, misshapen, and ugly. They flock through one's dreams at night, a wild mob of nightmares."²²

Indeed, the most characteristic form of Hindu worship is the act of *darsan*, with one's eyes beholding the deity in the form of an image and "being seen" in turn by the deity. God is visible, palpable, present to one's senses. What we call an "idol" receives all the attention that a beloved ought to receive—gestures of respect and humility, signs of subservience, care for daily needs. In what one could call a kind

²¹Chapter XI of the *Bhagavadgita*. Quoted from R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavadgita: With a Commentary Based on the Original Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969).

²²Mark Twain, *Following the Equator* (Hartford, CA: American Publishing, 1898) 504, as cited in Diana L. Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima, 1981) 15.

of doll house religion,²³ the deity is to be awakened, bathed, dressed, fed, entertained, put to sleep. Such characterizes the worship of the Hare Krishna group, for instance.

Indeed, the Hindu theologian can rhapsodize on God's presence in the idol much like Martin Luther did on God's presence in the humble babe of Bethlehem, sucking at his mother's breast:

This is the greatest grace of the Lord, that being free He becomes bound, being independent He becomes dependent for all His service on His devotee....[b]ehold the supreme sacrifice of Isvara, here the Almighty becomes the property of the devotee....He carries Him about, fans Him, feeds Him, plays with Him—yea, the Infinite has become finite, that the child soul may grasp, understand and love Him.²⁴

Is the basic difference between Hinduism and the Hebrew religion that one is iconic and the other aniconic? Hardly. Rather, they represent two different kinds of iconic, image-based religion. The injunction against graven images is not so much a defense of a pure, aniconic monotheism as it is a protection of the locus where God's image is most truly present—in the human. God's image is not locatable in temple or shrine, not finally even in mere word, but in the concrete human. God is not finally present in the world in the form of an image which cannot see or speak or act.²⁵ An "idol" is not God's counterpart.²⁶

III. CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

But we are God's counterpart. This is the connection. It is a connection that is relational in the fullest sense of personal, rather than in a primarily mystical or devotional mode. We are God's counterpart with whom something happens as we live in society and with nature. Or perhaps it is better to say, we are God's failed counterpart. Human culture is the demonstration of the fact that we have failed to image God. Consider our relations with nature! Consider our relations with one

²³This discussion is in part appropriated from my paper, "World Religions: The Problem of Imaging Christ," to be published in Vol. XXIII of the Proceedings of the Theology Institute, Villanova University, 1991.

²⁴Bharatan Kumarappa, *The Hindu Conception of the Deity as Culminating in Ramanuja* (London: Luzac and Company, 1934) 316-317, cited in Eck, Darsan, 35.

²⁵Cf. Isaiah 40:18-20 and 46:5-7. The point to be made is that images do not rightly compare with God. Making this point can sometimes turn to mockery as in Isaiah 44:9-20. However one should not misconstrue this Hebrew mockery as foolishly making the categorical mistake of thinking that the pagans actually believe a block of wood to be God, as some interpreters would have it. The mockery is rather of a wrong conception of God's image.

²⁶See, for example, Terence E. Fretheim, "The Color of God: Israel's God-Talk and Life Experience," *Word & World* 6 (1986) 265. Fretheim argues that the Old Testament prohibition of images points primarily to the concern to protect God's relatedness. "God is not present in the world in the form of an image which cannot see or speak or act." We might prefer to change this last sentence to read "not paradigmatically" or "not normatively" rather than simply "not" present. He expands this idea further: "This interpretation is also continuous with that point where the Old Testament does talk about a legitimate concrete image. It is the human being with all of its capacities for interrelationships which is believed to be the appropriate image of God in the life of the world (Gen 1:26-27). This is almost certainly a development from God's theophanic appearances in human form so central to Israel's knowledge of God, as we have seen. This is also consonant with New Testament language with respect to Jesus

Christ, who is called 'the image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15)." In a similar vein, Garrett Green, *Imagining God*, 91-92, writes: "[T]he reason for the prohibition is not the material or finite *nature* of the images per se but rather...[the] confusion of creature and Creator.... There can be no *graven* image of God, not because God has no image but because he has already established his own, *human* image of himself." For his fuller discussion see pp. 91-97. See also his critique of Gordon Kaufman's iconoclasm and the unnecessary theological dilemma it creates, p. 165, note 25.

another! These are the measure of connectedness with God.

It is in this setting and amid these considerations that the Christian image of Christ comes into play. It is now no longer the human race as such that is made "in the image of God," but it is that one individual of the human race who "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation" (Col 1:15). Here is fulfilled the human vocation.

And what a vocation! Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). "Christ," was the answer, an answer which envisioned a Messiah of triumph and success who would restore the kingdom to Israel. In fact, however, the unbroken Christ of Peter's confession became the broken Christ of the cross—Christ, the broken image.

What is a broken image? Why do images break?

It was with great interest that I read in the newspapers on the 4th and 5th of June that students at Beijing University dared to demonstrate against the post-Tiananmen oppression, and that they did so by throwing bottles outside their dorm windows. This action is an imaginative image. As the papers correctly pointed out, this was done because Deng Xiaoping's given name, *xiaoping*, has the same sound as the words for "small bottle," although the actual meaning of his name is "the lesser peace." During the events that led up to the downfall of the Gang of Four in 1976, small bottles had appeared everywhere in Beijing, and most importantly in Tiananmen Square. These were signs of support for Deng, whose forthright action led to the downfall of that tyranny. However, in the events of June 4, small bottles were instead smashed on the streets and sidewalks.

Alongside this broken image we might place that of the Goddess of Democracy. This imaginative styrofoam image, erected in Tiananmen Square and directly facing the image of Chairman Mao, caught the imagination of a generation. But on the early morning of June 4th it was toppled and crushed by tanks and bulldozers, together with bodies and hopes for freedom. Both of these are broken images, yet very different in their brokenness—one broken in just protest, the other in just vengeance. However different their meaning, they are the same at least in one respect, that both kinds of brokenness find their meaning against the background of evil. A broken image is broken because there is wrong.

It is the nature of saving images that they are also broken images. The Christ is a broken image: "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (Mark 15:31).²⁷ This is the Christ of Christian imagination.

"Created...in the image of God" to be God's counterpart in the world, culture is the act of our imaging, the still failed fulfillment of our Genesis vocation, the mirror of our being. Our renewed calling is to be conformed to the image of the broken Christ. Perhaps in being broken we can be a saving presence in this world. Those who bear the image of the broken Christ can afford to learn from Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, Hindu, Native American, African traditional, not to mention Muslim and Jew and, it may even turn out, from the New Age enthusiast as well,

thereby becoming what only the broken Christ makes possible. Our vocation is a social one and an ecological one—it is a vocation to culture. Of what “god” are we the counterpart?

²⁷See Kosuke Koyama, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai*, chapter 20, especially 241-42.