

Does MAP (Metropolitan Associates of Philadelphia) Need Theology?

Robert W. Bertram

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I. ASKING THE QUESTION

A) My presentation comes at the very end of the day's program, obviously not because I am to speak the last word on the subject but rather because I am to attempt a summing up of what all has been said earlier today. I'm sure I can count on your sympathy in face of such an impossible assignment, all the moreso since my presentation has to be as impromptu as this. You'll have to take potluck. But the summing-up job does have to be attempted, at least. What is being summed up here is not only what we today have said but also what we have previously read—about MAP, that is.

B) More than merely summing up, this is also supposed to be a pulling together, a synthesizing. In other words, not just a mirror but a refracted mirror—a summary which is directional, which is out to make a point. Let's state that "point" in the form of a leading question: Does MAP need theology? Let that question, like a magnetic centre, polarize our summary. What doesn't apply to that question will, for purposes of economy, have to be omitted from the summing-up. So this will not simply be a case of your meeting yourselves coming back. In my

“summary” you may not even recognize yourselves. I’ll be able to appreciate your disclaimers.

C) The question. Does MAP need theology, is not asking whether it needs one theology in particular, this one rather than that one. What’s being asked is whether MAP needs a theology at all, any theology? Conceivably it could get along well enough without a theology, or without theologies (plural). Its participants, conceivably, might be committed purely and simply to action, to getting something done. From that viewpoint, spending time and energy on theological reflection and argument, rather than on doing the decisive deeds, might well be a distraction from the work at hand.

D) Nor is the question asking, Does MAP have a theology? Perhaps it does. Perhaps it has a whole variety of theologies. Perhaps, if we equate a group’s theology with its ultimate norms, with its non-negotiable commitments, MAP might just turn out to have quite a plurality of theologies around the traditional Christian issues (God, sin, redemption, etc.) and quite a unanimous consensus, even a rather closed orthodoxy, around certain contemporary “secular” issues (commitment to change, to openness, to dialogue, to scientific administration, to the preeminence of decision-making, etc.) Perhaps. But that is not our question. Our question is not, Does MAP have theology (-ies)? Our question is, Need it have?

E) Needing is always to some purpose. ‘Necessary for what? What is that MAP objective for which theology may or may not be needed? In my trying to answer that question—in my trying to answer it—you’ll recognize immediately how pretentious it is for an outsider like me to speak for MAP. At this point I am merely a summarizer. From what I’ve heard and read so far—and only on the strength of that slim second-hand experience—my impression is that MAP’S purpose comes to something like this: to help the

city, primarily through deliberate institutional change, to fulfill its callings—the callings of its individual participants as well as the callings of the institutions in which they participate. I see MAP as a caller-out of the city's calling—a *vox vocationis urbis* (if latinity is needed to sound learned). And the call, as MAP seems to conceive it, is never really heard until it is acted upon, until the city implements the call in appropriate institutional change. Is that, at least approximately, what MAP is in business for? If so, does MAP for that purpose need theology?

F) How we answer that question will now depend on how we think theology serves the accomplishing of our purposes. For example, we may think of theology primarily as a motivator. On this assumption, the men of the city may need not so much to know what their calling is as to be animated to the doing of that calling which they already acknowledge. In that case theology would function as an enabler. And perhaps the test of such a theology's validity would be the rather pragmatic one: Does it succeed in fact in impelling the city to action? Or negatively, Might not the same action be motivated just as effectively by some other, non-theological factors?

G) Or on second thought, perhaps the city does need, first of all, to be reminded what its calling is. Then theology might be needed as an educator, a prophet. So defined, theology might in that case not be so testable by its pragmatic results. It may be enough in that case that theology simply witnesses clearly and boldly to what the city's calling is, whether or not the city heeds such theological witness. Of course, that might still beg the question, Does the city's calling have to be defined by theology? Might not a perceptive social scientist do at least as well—not only insofar as his pragmatic results are concerned but already insofar as his very definition—yes, his “prophetic” definition—of the calling is concerned?

H) Other examples—that is, of how theology is supposed to help us accomplish our purposes—could be multiplied. Let us suggest one more. Perhaps a group like MAP may think of its theology as its own most basic self-designation: “Here we stand ...” Theology in that case is, shall we say, confessional. Theology would thus serve to identify MAP to the city in terms of MAP’s own ultimate commitments. MAP’s theology (ies) would thus be its most significant autobiographical signal. If so, then how would such a theology serve the working out of MAP’s purposes in practice? As the watch-dog of MAP’s integrity. Its theology would persistently inquire, How internally consistent is MAP’s practice with these its dearest axioms?

I) Obviously these different ways of seeing theology as an end-gaining means are, though different, not mutually exclusive. Any actual theology probably combines then all in one way or another.

J) Equally obviously, this present discussion has now proceeded so far that we can no longer pretend we are merely forming the question. We are already on the verge, if not farther, of attempting the answer. So let’s get on with that. Mindful of the varied ways in which theology might serve as an end-gaining means, and mindful of what MAP’s end is, let’s try to decide now whether a theology is needed as a means to that end. But now, at the last moment, let’s make a confession: Our question before the house (Does MAP, for its purpose, need theology?), far from being the neutral question it appears to be, is very much colored by the way we answer it. For example, the question included such ambiguous terms as “theology” or (with reference to MAP’s objective) “calling.” How shall these terms be defined? Well, however we define them, our definitions will already reflect a particular theological answer. What the question means depends in part on how the question gets answered. Of course it does not follow, let’s remember, that

these definitions of terms are simply arbitrary, undebatable, any more than our theological answer need be arbitrary. But the way we construe the question does depend very closely on how we plan to answer it.

K) Let me say it in other words. Our question, Does MAP need theology, demands nothing more of an answer, literally, than a simple Yes or No. Logically, that should suffice to answer the question. Actually, though, who would be satisfied with such a sneaky, dogmatic answer? None of us would. We would all insist that, whether the initial answer is Yes or No, it ought to be supported by some kind of substantiation. My own answer to the question is going to be Yes, as you will see. But what you wouldn't see if I left the matter stand with such a simplistic answer, and what you'd have a right to see, is why the answer is Yes. But the minute I start spelling out the Why's, you'll see that, already way back at the question-asking stage, I had previously decided how I was going to define the key-terms in the question itself.

L) Perhaps only a professor would be as exasperatingly meticulous about the rules of the game as I here have been. This endless navel-scrutinizing to which I have been subjecting you must seem awfully academic. But I do have my reasons. MAP, being the ecumenical group it is, demands communication among its members from the most diverse confessional backgrounds. This means that a representative of any one confessional viewpoint who aims to be understood within this diversity is going to have to take special pains to lay all his cards on the table, eschewing any hidden agendas. That is the reason I have taken so much time so far with analyzing the ground rules. In a mono-confessional group such scrupulosity would be unnecessary. Perhaps, for that matter, MAP is more than ecumenical. Perhaps it represents more traditions than simply the Christian churches—although, if I am correct, the Roman and Eastern

churches (to name only two) are not yet represented. Perhaps MAP includes also some extra-Christian, secularist traditions. Perhaps it is not only ecumenical but pluralist. If so, that only underscores all the more the obligation each one of us has to expose our respective starting- points. –But now, at last, on to the question, or rather the answer—at least, one answer.

II. THE “REFLECTION” IS CRITICAL

A) Let me fasten upon a key-term in MAP’s nomenclature, “action-research,” or as I understand the term has since been rephrased, “action-reflection” What I take the term to mean is this. “Action,” the city in its actual operation, the way things in fact are, provides the datum, the given, which MAP takes as its point of departure. To put the same thing negatively, MAP does not proceed at the outset from “reflection,” from ideas as such, from (let us say) certain theoretical truths or doctrines. Whatever “reflection” MAP undertakes is only subsequent, after the fact. It is a thinking through, an evaluating, of a prior reality situation. However, the reflection, once it is done, is not meant to leave the action unaffected. The action in turn is to be influenced by the reflection. To be very precise, then, doesn’t “action-reflection” really amount to this: action/reflection/reflected-upon-action?

Doing/criticizing/criticized-doing? At least that is how I understand this intriguing term.

B) Now let me try to connect—and eventually connect, theologically—“action-reflection” with MAP’s general objectives to help the city, primarily through deliberate institutional change, to fulfill its callings—the callings of its individual participants as well as the callings of the institutions in which they participate. “Action,” I take it, refers to the way the city (both its institutions and its individuals) is trying

more or less to fulfill its callings at present, under existing circumstances. The assumption is (and a fair assumption it seems to be) that the city's present "fulfilling of its callings" leaves much to be desired, and that what it needs first of all is "reflection," an open-eyed, critical evaluation of its presently deficient "action." So this first reflective, critical stage is already one step on MAP's way toward helping the city fulfill its callings. The further stage, the real pay-off, comes when this critical reflection produces reflected-upon-action, criticized-doing, in the form of such "deliberate institutional change" as will actively help the city to fulfill its callings.—Of course, saying only this much does not yet say anything explicitly theological. That comes next.

C) You'll notice that I have used the word "reflection" interchangeably with the word "criticism." That is intentional. When the people from MAP "reflect" upon present "action," I gather that they are not making merely neutral observations about it. They are being critical about it, pro and con. MAP, in this respect like the Church, is no mere observatory, no womb-with-a-window. But neither does this mean merely that MAP comes down off the bleacher and mixes in where the action is. It does that, to be sure. But it does more. MAP plays also an evaluative role. It is a critic. In the midst of that action in which it dares to get involved, MAP passes judgment. This means, incidentally, that that "action" which is thus judged is no longer the action of the city alone, but rather the combined, joint, intertwined action of MAP and the city. That closely is MAP identified with the city, so closely that MAP's action too shares in the criticism, comes under the judgment of its own "reflection." But the point I want to make here is that MAP does perform a critical function. Any social-scientist who still espouses the old orthodox positivist line of objectivity at all costs would, I imagine, be tempted to shrink from this

evaluative function. MAP does dare to make what the old Neo-Kantians called “value judgments.”

D) The word “criticism,” moreover, recalls that Greek verb from which it stems, *Krinein*, and its companion noun, *Krima*, from which we get such English words as “crime,” “incriminate,” “discriminate,” “incriminate.” That has theological significance, and not just because these words happen to be Greek, the language of the New Testament. No, there is a better reason than that. What is of interest here, theologically, is what the New Testament does with this vocabulary of “criticism”—one of the most prominent themes in the biblical literature, as any simple, mechanical word-count would quickly show. In biblical theology what in the last analysis gives *Krima* the momentous significance it has is that it is *Krima* from God, the ultimate criticism or evaluation, the divine judgment. So this is theological talk.

E) You can guess where we’re heading: MAP, in its function as critical “reflector,” reflects the divine criticism. No less. It is MAP’S awesome job to be a discerner and a bearer of the divine judgment. MAP is the agent, or rather one of the agents, of the criminate order of God in the world. But notice: “in the world.” For that is where the divine criticism occurs: in the midst of human history, in the defeat of the Pharaohs, or outside the walls of Jerusalem on a hill called The Skull, in every sinner’s and every sinful institution’s rise and fall. In any theology which is even remotely biblical, and even in some theologies which aren’t, the judgment of God takes place (what a revealing phrase), it eventuates in human events. And where else if not in the city? But that is also where MAP is. Still, what I am suggesting is not only that MAP and the criminate order of God happen to be somehow co-present. Rather the one is operationally immanent in the other.

F) Granted, this does not mean that any and every criticism MAP happens to come up with, because it is MAP's, is therefore also God's. Hardly. What I do mean is that MAP's criticism had jolly well better be God's. For if it isn't—rather, since it isn't—MAP itself comes under the same ultimate evaluation. The only imaginable way-out would be for MAP to get out of the criticism business, and hence out of the city itself. But it's too late for that. MAP is committed. More exactly, it has been assigned, on what I would take to be rather high Authority.

G) If the divine evaluation is as inextricably intertwined as all that with the very data which it evaluates, if the critical "reflection" is so inseparable from the "action" it criticizes, then that circumstance itself is reason enough for teaming up theologians with social scientists. That is the theological rationale, it seems to me, for MAP's earlier version of the term "action-reflection," namely "action-research." MAP's theological criticism ought, for that theological reason, to be (in a word) informed. I don't mean by that, of course, that social scientific research can provide MAP with that dimension of divine Krima which it is under orders to assert. That would still have to be provided by a Source which no social scientist, I'm sure, would care to invoke: the divine Word, Logos, Verdict. Still, that Word cannot be "worded," implemented or even conceived apart from the quite immanent, observable city-forms and city-men—I almost said denizens and citizens—which are the social scientist's stock in trade. The uneasy alliance between theology and social science which MAP has now got to live with, and make the most of, is not just some fluke predicament which MAP has gotten itself into. This uneasy alliance, it seems to me, is of the nature of the case essential—theologically essential—to MAP's assignment. And I have already intimated on Whose authority I suspect that assignment is being made.

III. INSTITUTIONS AND CALLINGS

A) Having broached the theological significance of the MAP word “reflection,” reflection as criticism, let me pick up next two other suggestive words in the MAP nomenclature, “institutions” and “callings,” both of which are used to describe the city. Would it be fair to the way MAP operates with these terms to say that the city’s significant “action” is done not only by individual persons but also by supra-personal “institutions,” and that both, institutions as well as their individual participants, do their action in response—responsibly or irresponsibly— to their “callings”?

B) So the city’s dramatic action, the story-line, is carried also by the city’s institutions. They too, and not their individual members alone, are part of the *dramatis personae*. An institution, accordingly, seems to be more than the sum of its parts. For example, an insurance “corporation”—notice the biological metaphor, *corpus*—or a city’s health and welfare “system” or its law-enforcement “organization” or its “body” politic, is an organic whole, not just a cumulative, additive total but a collectivity, not just a sum-total but a one-total. And in some sense this institution as a whole does things. Its doings may always, of course, be carried out by its individual office-holders and executives. The company, as such, does not dictate letters, answer the phone, go to meetings, or even make decisions. Its representatives do— vice-president Brown or credit-manager Smith or school-board member Jones—but as just that, as the representatives of the whole. We have not fully understood Brown’s action when we have understood it simply as his. Not even when we hold him, as we say, responsible. The responsibility for his action is shared by his entire company.

C) This sort of talk, which sees supra-individual structures as beings in their own right, as possessing some sort of

independent reality, might make some folks in our culture a little nervous. We do have an inherited tradition of drastic individualism, perhaps nowhere so drastic as in the theology and piety of Protestant sectarianism. Our culture's theoreticians still feel strong obligation to "Occam's razor": not to multiply metaphysical entities beyond our need of them. For that matter, however, MAP's implicit collectivism may still not violate Occam's razor. To talk about social institutions as somehow having a life of their own, their own "calling," is not necessarily to multiply metaphysical entities. Perhaps we "need" to talk this way about institutions simply for pragmatic reasons: for example, in order to identify enough social responsibility to get the action done. And for this pragmatic purpose the traditional category of the individual person does not seem to provide us with a sufficiently comprehensive handle for social action. The question now arises, however, whether such talk about supra-personal formations is required also by a theological need. I believe it is.

D) Where in the tradition of Christian theology might MAP's current talk about "institutions" find a sympathetic counterpart? The traditional category which here comes to my own mind is the old theological notion of "orders" (the familial order, the political order, etc.)—the "orders of creation," as they are usually referred to, or as they might more aptly be called, the Creator's orderings. I invoke this wooly old term with some trepidation, not because it may not have a lot to say to us, (it does) but because nowadays it is liable to such grievous misunderstanding. For that matter, I suppose I would have been at least as reluctant about that other old theological term which MAP is repristinating, "callings." I would have thought, as some other contemporary theologians do, that this grand old medieval and Reformation idea of the "calling" (*vocatio*) had by now become pretty unworkable in our anonymous

mass societies. Yet I am emboldened by MAP's daring to translate these old terms into a new day. Why not? Then, too, I suspect that the present sociological interest in "institutions" and the Parsons-Weber school of social "systems" (e.g., the kinship system, the bureaucratic system, the ethnic system) do trace their ancestry, in part, back to the old theological idea of "orders of creation." But to revitalize this category theologically will take a bit of doing. MAP, by its example, induces me to try.

E) What theological need is there—not what pragmatic social action need, but now what theological need—for distinguishing those supra-personal, institutionalized formations of behavior (the "Creator's orderings"), on the one hand, from the behavior of individual persons, on the other? The theological functions of such a distinction can, for our purposes, be reduced to two: a creational function and a critical function. First, the creational function. If the world as it is reflects not only human fallenness and guilt but also the everywhere active arrangements by the Creator, then it is clearly impossible to incriminate, to indict the whole ball of wax. You and I and everything we do, as ours, may be condemnable, that is true. But that—namely, our doing—isn't all that gets done. Not by a long shot. There is ever so much that is beyond reproach, for the simple reason that it is the doing of the Creator. The creation story records that the Lord God saw what he had made and "behold, it was good." And that divine approval still obtains, even in the midst of a creation which people roundly abuse. What they do with his creating is under judgment, what he does with it is not. If the question is asked, Is the world good or evil, the answer is Yes. Yes, what? Yes, it is both. But such an ambiguous answer demands a distinction. That is the distinction which is provided by the theological idea of the "orders of creation," and for a creational reason: namely, to appreciate

that the Creator's arrangements (as distinguished from our own violation of them) are good.

F) For example, as the Old Testament observes about this Creator, "He places the solitary in families." And that is good. Without that biological-social arrangement there would be no human life, no culture, in fact no personal identity. John Brown is who he is because of his having been assigned genetically and socially to just this kinship group, the Browns. It discriminates him from the non-Browns—say, from the Smiths and Joneses—at the same time that it binds him into a special web of responsibility to the other Browns (father, mother, siblings). This assignment gives him not only security and nurture but also a large measure of his biographical identity: he is a Brown. That can all be very good for him. However, that does not make him a good man. If he is like the rest of us, he never really succeeds in doing justice to his family. Before God he is a discredit to it and in fact neglects and misshapes it. Still, none of his guilt can alter the truth that this arrangement itself, his belonging to a family at all, is a prior good. His familial irresponsibility does not annul the familial good that is being done in, for and through him. There is always that familial dimension about him, though not to his credit, which persists in being a credit to his Creator. John Brown is, in his own culpable action as son or husband or father, nevertheless the bearer, the human vehicle, of that creational arrangement called the family, which is good.

G) And what is true of Brown's kinship is true also of all those other innumerable collectivities which intersect in his life and of which he is one bearer. His ethnic and linguistic communities, his occupational and commercial communities, the city itself, and all those other institutionalized formations into which he is constantly being "placed," bind him, the solitary," into a web of serviceableness and mutual

responsibility with all the other solitaries. The Creator's orderings, these institutional structures, are each of them but sub-sectors of the God-world bind that Brown is in. But as the Creator's bond, as distinguished from Brown's rebellions against it, it is good.

H) There is also, as we said, a second theological function in distinguishing the supra- personal patterns of action, on the one hand, from the actions of individuals, on the other: a critical function. This recalls our earlier derivation of the term "criticism" from its biblical root, *krima*. The criticism we spoke of is nothing less than the divine judgment. And as we also said, this judgment is not a million light-years away, harbored in the privacy of the divine mind, but rather is constantly being played out in the down-to-earth rough-and-tumble of historical action. Now let us connect this previous assertion with what we have more recently been saying about the orders of creation. Not only are these creational orderings good, as we have just now seen. But precisely because they are good, they stand in criticism of their sinful participants. The Creator's arrangements need to be distinguished from their spoilers for the same theological reason that the Judge needs to be distinguished from the culprits. It is through these very immanent, institutionalized ties that bind men to one another and to their Creator that he, as Judge, exercises his criticism upon them.

I) What we are saying might easily create a misimpression, namely, that it is only individuals who are sinful and judged and that supra-personal institutions are not. That of course would be as much of an oversimplification as that opposite formula, "moral man and immoral society," with which the early Reinhold Niebuhr was identified. No, the creational, institutional orderings, as they in fact exist—as, say, the social scientist encounters them in their actual

concreteness—are not unambiguously good anymore than the individuals are whom they engage. Precisely because of their prior goodness they are, like all good creations of God, extremely susceptible of perversion, the favorite victims of demonization. That is why MAP has to be preoccupied with “deliberate institutional change.” That is why, moreover, these divinely instituted arrangements dare not be contrasted with their sinful participants the way the ideal is contrasted with the actual. It is not by reason of some intact ideal perfection of theirs that the orders exercise their critical function. But then, if they are not as ideal as all that and are as ambiguously actual as all the rest of life, by reason of what do they exercise criticism?

J) Answer: by reason of their ‘built-in criticalness or, what amounts to the same thing, their retributiveness. Doesn’t institution always include retribution? What transpersonal collectivity is there, whether marriage or family or national community or “the public” or business corporation or educational system or state, which doesn’t impose some set of sanctions, of reward and penalty, for recompensing its conformists and its infractors? Any particular retribution may be subtle or crass, harsh or sentimental, just or unjust. But retribution of some kind there always is, and this seems to be an essential ingredient in every form of institutionalized behavior. The very pains I am at this moment taking to formulate this sentence clearly and convincingly, so as to avoid the quizzical looks or the head-shaking of my peers, not to mention their outright disagreement, is itself testimony that even such sub-institutionalized behavior as scholarly discussion operates forcefully by means of its own forms of retribution. We may prefer to call this retributive factor by more euphemistic names, like incentive or discipline, but the reality of it remains. Christians may reinterpret the old law of “an eye for

an eye" around the "new commandment: that ye love one another," as in the Sermon on the Mount, as indeed they should. But in another sense, paradoxically, that only intensifies the pressure of retribution. That only heightens the demand for the breach of which the loveless man, the hateful man, is all the more abjectly shamed.

K) Presumably what would be needed to change all this is, not some new and subtler form of retribution, but rather a whole new social order, a revolutionary program of institutions, in which retribution of any and every sort would no longer be necessary. And that new, non-retributive order, if it were really to displace the retribution of the present criminate order where it is—that is, in the cities and market-places of history— would have to be just that immanent, just that down-to-earth, just that institutionalized, just that (if you'll pardon the expression) incarnate. There, if you'll allow just one more pun, is the crux of the matter. But barring the incursion of such a non-retributive order, the prevailing retribution in every institution retains its undisputed validity. In fact, without such retribution, every existing institution (and not only the demonized ones) as well as the members they involve would disintegrate. That retributive feature of creation, so institutionalized into our life together as to keep us at least minimally responsible, is an essential part of what is "good" about creation. But at the same time it is the direst judgment upon us that we even so much as need that retribution. That is the critical, the judgmental function of the institutionalized "orders of creation." And it is in the service of that institutional, retributive *krima* that I see MAP, willy-nilly, engaged. I say willy-nilly because a critic's lot is not an 'appy one.

L) Evidently the way MAP goes about doing this—and by MAP we mean of course not only its staff but all its Metropolitan

Associates of Philadelphia, its associated Christian school-teachers and neighbors and executives and merchants and politicians—is to enunciate in action and reflection the city’s “callings.” In an older theology the term “calling”—in German, *Beruf*—was coupled with another German word, *Stand* (pronounced *Shtahnt*). It is spelled just like our English word, “stand.” Nowhere in our language do we any longer use the noun “stand” in connection with the verb “to call,” except in one situation: the court-room. The witness or the defendant is “called to the stand.” But perhaps that metaphor of the witness-stand might still be invoked to restore some remnant of meaning to the theological word “calling.” In the case, say, of John Brown (if once more we may summon him as our example), it is the intricate complex of institutionalized ties—familial, occupational, class, political, ethnic, commercial ties— which cross and knot into his unique biography, his and no one else’s, binding him in responsibility to fellowmen to whom no one else has exactly the same access John Brown has. This unique God-world bind defines John Brown’s circumstance, the place where he stands, his witness-stand. His call to this stand is not only to do this and that, to engage in action. He is likewise called—and this is the point of our witness-stand metaphor— to give an account of his action, as a defendant.

M) You’ll notice that we are not now speaking of Brown as a “witness” in the old evangelistic sense, where—as the idiom goes—Brown “bears witness to his faith” to other men. No, here Brown is called to be accountable to his chief Critic, the One who calls him to this stand in the first place. True, he may simultaneously be responsible to his fellowmen. But primarily he is responsible for his fellowman, to that One who is constantly calling him under question. This does not mean either that Brown is accountable for his action to MAP, to the rest of his Metropolitan Associates of Philadelphia, although I see no

reason why that couldn't happen assuming the MAP-men are ready for that intimate sort of group discipline. In any case, Brown is MAP. That is, he is one more Christian man out there in the city who has the rare truthfulness to acknowledge that where he is is the witness-stand from which he is answerable to the One who has him there on trial. No one pretends, of course, that Brown's position is a comfortable one. But truthful? Yes.

N) How is it, once more, that Brown is called to account? Through those same institutions which place him on his unique stand. Not only are these institutions the ties which bind him in service and responsibility to his fellows, thus performing their creational function. Also and simultaneously they exercise their retribution upon him, facing him always with at least the prospect, if not the fact, of his delinquency. Thus the same institutions perform their critical function, and Brown is the sort who can recognize that function of theirs for what it is. He is not one who has to wait for special, esoteric revelations about his sinnerhood, or even has to wait until Sunday to hear about his sinnerhood in broad homiletical generalizations—which, because, of the complex nature of the congregation, is all his preacher has time for. Brown discerns—I might have said he “divines”—the exposure of his guilt clinically, in the innumerable retributions which are institutionalized in his calling all week long.

O) But MAP-man Brown doesn't merely sit on his witness-stand passively and wait for the institutions' criticisms to come to him. So respectful is he of that criticism that he even helps to clarify it and sharpen it. If he knows that the institutionalized retributions all about him are but the media of divine accusation, he also knows how blunted this accusation can become, or how off-target, how overly rigid or overly permissive. In a word, Brown knows how his institutions are being demonized, with the result that their incriminations and

recriminations strike the wrong people, or perhaps strike the right people, but so unreasonably that the criticism cannot possible be taken seriously. Therefore, to extend the term “calling” now beyond the individual John Browns to the supra-personal institutions, these institutions themselves also have their callings. They, too, are on trial and are called to account. They too must be re-formed—as MAP says, by “deliberate institutional change”—under pressure of retributive criticism. Of them, specifically, the cross-examination demands: Are they indeed performing their creational function of binding their members together in mutual responsibility, and their critical function of recompensing those who have it coming? And those institutions to which MAP has privileged access should, for that reason, become most aware of the critical stand to which they are being called.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I am entitling this last part of my presentation “unfinished business” because I am going to have to stop at this point even though, in a very real sense, it is the point where MAP’s really crucial business, its crucial theological business, begins. I have to stop because both you and I have run out of time. (That hard fact of life, by the way, is a stark example of institutionalized retribution: to meet our responsibilities we are allotted only so much time, and who ever has enough time for the day’s work? But that itself is a form, a very near-at-hand, institutionalized form, of the divine Criticism.) The “business” which we today are not in a position to finish is—well, every Christian immediately senses what it is. It is, in one word, the gospel. The good news. What we have said so far, about “criticism” and “institutions” and “callings,” is not really good news, even though it was not for that reason untrue. The good news to which we have yet to progress, in explicating the

theology of MAP, was barely hinted at in the preceding sections for example, in III, I. True, the awfully grim stuff we have been discussing so far could not even have been endured except by those who already know what's ahead, beyond the law in the promise. But that promise still cries out to be explicated: how, for instance, the same One who is the unsparing Critic did himself enter the city (as actual a city as Philadelphia: Jerusalem), making himself a "metropolitan associate"—the *socius peccatorum*, "eating and drinking with sinners"—and suffering their identical Criticism, all the way to the death, suffering it out of existence. Or how this triumphant death of his and resurrection have launched a revolution and a whole new creation of institutions, non-retributive and re-creative, which are now stealthily abroad in the cities, lovingly subverting the old order. The working out of that theology, our real business, we haven't yet finished. Meanwhile it's well to remember that he who came as he said to do his father's business, also could say, "It is finished«" That's where the theology of MAP, I'm happy in believing, begins.

Robert W. Bertram

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