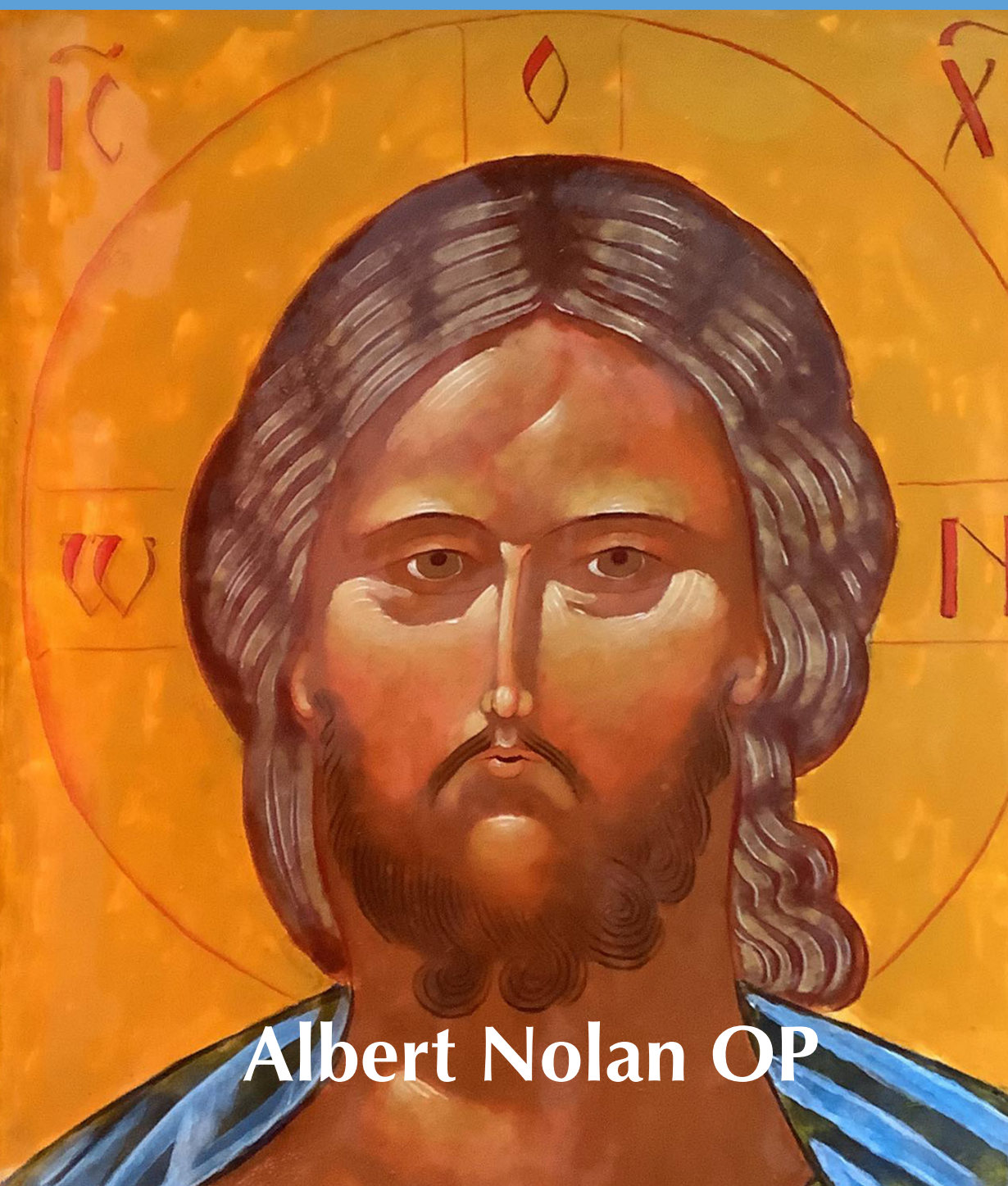
The Lordship of Jesus Christ

In the New Testament



Albert Nolan OP

The use of the expression 'Lord' in the biblical tradition has a long and checkered history. In earliest times, Israel's authors took a widely used Near Eastern expression to indicate a figure with 'lordship' and authority who must be obeyed *(Adon*). But they added a sense of possession: *Adonai*.

The sacred name JHWH was never pronounced. In speech and public reading, it was replaced with 'my Lord' (*Adonai*). In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint) the use of *Adonai* led to the use of the expression *kyrios* to refer to God, among its many other meanings.

In the Greek of early Christian times, *kyrios* could refer to a husband, a political authority, or other respected figures. One finds these variations across the New Testament. Mary Magdalene, thinking the risen Jesus is the gardener, greets him as 'sir' (Jn 20:15: *kyrie*). Convinced by his presence and authoritative command, she announces to the disciples that she has seen 'the Lord' [v 20: *ton Kyrion*]).

The lordship of Jesus was recognised as the early Christians confessed their faith in the crucified and risen Lord (*kyrios*). Paul insists that the Jesus Christ took on the human condition, suffered, died, and has risen. Because of that every knee should bend and all tongues confess that Jesus is 'the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil 2:10–11: *kyrios Iēsous Christos*). Jesus is never 'God', but 'the Lord' whose equality with God (Phil 2:6) has never been lost.

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Nolan elaborates upon the use of *kurios* in particular contexts, examining the particular Scripture passages where *kurios* appears. His research is thorough for its time and displays care and attention to detail.

As you begin to read this dissertation of the young Albert Nolan, keep in mind, that this work provided the foundation for Albert's growing love affair with his God, his country, with all people and with the universe. And may you recognize in these pages the labor of one of the Dominican Order's most humble and most gentle of giants.

Maribeth Howell, OP

Professor Emerita at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St Louis, USA

As Joerg Rieger eloquently argues in his Christ & Empire, the use of 'lord' by the early Christian movement was subversive of empire, a subaltern act of resistance to the claim of the Roman emperor's claim to be lord. Deploying forms of what James Scott describes as 'infrapolitics', both Paul and the Gospels contest notions of the 'lordship' of the emperor, reconceptualising the concept through their representations of Jesus. However, as Rieger recognises, as the Church shifts from being a subversive movement to an establishment institution it came to imitate the logic of empire, including appropriating dominating understandings of lordship.

Gerald West

Professor Emeritus, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

When Albert initiated this research, he did so for academic purposes and to further his personal theological knowledge (faith seeking understanding) and spiritual growth. The term 'lord' is still very operative in the liturgy and prayer today.

The lordship of Christ is *a divine function*, *a saving function* and it was given to Jesus by God. The divine functions are functions of ruling, saving, giving life and sending the Holy Spirit. The term lord is purposeful and meaningful divine service for the benefit of all God's People, the entire Church and for all of Creation, not to be equated with male-controlled interpretations and connotations of our current times. The clarification of the concept 'lord' for Jesus has undergone further clarifications since 1963, but the thesis now in book form, makes it clear that Albert was in search of theological clarification and understanding and he succeeded in his undertaking . . . Albert's findings make it clear that the title is not patriarchal, or sexist and neither exclusive. He underlines that the title 'lord' for Jesus Christ is a *function* and not a gender concern. The Lordship of Christ is a *divine function*, *a saving function* and it was given to Jesus by God. The divine functions are functions of ruling, saving, giving life and sending the Holy Spirit.

Jennifer Slater

Former Professor in Theology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

Albert Nolan OP

The Nolan Series—Series Editor—Mark James OP

The Nolan Series is a collection of publications by the late Fr Albert Nolan OP (1934–2022) from South Africa. The collection includes some out-of-print books, collections of essays, talks and journal articles covering a range of topics in theology, spirituality and social analysis.

1. *The Significance of the Trinity*, Albert Nolan OP, 2024.

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Albert Nolan OP

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Publisher's Note: Some changes to have been made to use inclusive language that was not the Norm in 1963 when this text was written

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To

Timothy McDermott OP

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Foreword

Maribeth Howell, OP

The name Albert Nolan is familiar to countless readers throughout the world. While his *Jesus Before Christianity* (1976, revised in 1992) and *Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom* (2006) are among his most widely read works, most likely every one of Nolan's writings reflect the soul of an individual who was deeply committed to his God, his country of South Africa, his Dominican family, the Church, and to the liberation of all people.

As a Dominican priest, Nolan fully embraced the Dominican motto *Contemplare et contemplate aliis tradere* a phrase attributed to St Thomas Aquinas, and which is commonly rendered 'to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation'. Without a doubt, Nolan was a man of prayer and a man whose intimate relationship with God was demonstrated by his passion for social justice.[1] Many people are unaware of the fact that when he was elected Master of the Dominican Order in 1983, Nolan declined this honour because he believed it more important that he continue to work against apartheid in South Africa, a decision that later required that he spend time in hiding because he was sought by the South African Security Police.

My introduction to Albert Nolan took place many years ago, when I participated in a book study of *Jesus Before Christianity.* The study group consisted of members of my community, the Dominican

1. Here I am reminded of the words of Richard Woods, OP, in an undated article of *Dom Life* he writes: 'For Dominicans contemplation and action are not separate elements of our life, but conjoined moments of prayer and ministry. Long before Ignatius of Loyola enjoined his followers to be 'contemplatives in action,' it was an intrinsic part of our spirituality.' https://domlife.org/Being Dominican/Spirituality/contemplationwoods.html (accessed November 13, 2024).