

The Kingdom of 'Diakonia'

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios

Outstanding scholar, theologian, philosopher, polyglot and man of letters. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios sought to bring together in a holistic vision, several disciplines like philosophy, economics, political science, medicine, education, physics and theology.

Born in 1922 at Tripunithura, Kerala, the great scholar-bishop had his earlier stints in his homestate as a journalist and postal service employee. He proceeded to Ethiopia in 1947 accepting the job of a teacher there and in course of time became the Special Secretary to Emperor Haillie Sellasi. He had an exceptional educational career in Yale, Princeton and Oxford Universities. Returning to Kerala, he was ordained as a priest of the Orthodox Church. In 1967 Fr. Paul Verghese became the Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary. In 1975, he was elevated as a bishop. Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios took charge of the Delhi Diocese of the Orthodox Church in July 1975.

Honours came unsought to Mar Gregorios. He had the good fortune to be the President of the World Council of Churches and the Indian Philosophical Congress. In 1988, he received the Soviet Land Nehru Award. His Grace travelled widely and showed an unusual intellectual courage to explore new paradigms in human thinking. He was visiting professor in several universities like the J. N. U. in New Delhi. The philosopher-bishop passed away on 24th November 1996 and his mortal remains lie entombed in the Orthodox Seminary Chapel, Kottayam.

Including the posthumous publications, Mar Gregorios has authored more than 47 books. *The Joy of Freedom, Freedom of Man, The Cosmic Man, The Human Presence, Enlightenment East and West, A Light Too Bright* and the spiritual autobiography *Love's Freedom: The Grand Mystery* are some of the most remarkable among these. Hundreds of his articles and lectures have been published in leading newspapers, and international magazines.

The Kingdom of 'Diakonia'

(Bible Studies)

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios

**MAR GREGORIOS FOUNDATION
ORTHODOX SEMINARY, KOTTAYAM**

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Preface

It was through the bible studies that ‘Paul Varghese’ (later Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios) became most popular, first in Ethiopia, then in India and later in the West. The present volume is a collection of bible studies by this great teacher of the Word of God. Mar Gregorios’ bible studies are marked by an inner beauty of inspired exposition and intuitive wisdom. He goes to the original text, recalls the context and reveals the meaning and message convincingly.

Although bible studies existed in various forms even during the early Christian centuries, they achieved a specific character and a renewed relevance in the modern ecumenical movement. The precursors of the modern ecumenical movement like the students’ and youth organizations found many common grounds in their search for Christian unity through the bible studies. Mar Gregorios was a sought out bible study-leader in many such ecumenical gatherings. The textual summaries of some such presentations constitute the major contents of this volume.

Some of these bible studies were published decades ago in the form of booklets and articles. But due to the unavailability of such materials to the present times and also due to the continuing enquiries for Mar Gregorios’ bible studies, the Mar Gregorios Foundation (M.G.F) took the decision to publish the present volume. It is entitled “Kingdom of Diakonia” mainly to link the two preferred biblical themes of Mar Gregorios viz. Kingdom of God and Diakonia. The title also underlines the message that the ‘authority’ of the Kingdom of God is based on the selfless serviceability, of the disciples.

We hereby thankfully acknowledge the painstaking efforts of Rev. Fr. C. C. Cherian, the former Secretary of M.G.F and Rev. Fr. Jacob

Mathew, the present Secretary to give shape to this volume. Mr. Joice Thottackad, the Secretary of Sophia Books, a devotee of Mar Gregorios, helped in many ways to get this published on the memorial day of Mar Gregorios in 2014. Let this be another gift and continuing guidance to all people who wish to follow the last words of Mar Gregorios in his spiritual autobiography: "Pray always that God's Kingdom may come and all evil be banished from the created order."

Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian

President,
Mar Gregorios Foundation

Nov. 24, 2014

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Part 1
The Gospel of the Kingdom

1

Blessed are the Poor

Luke 6:20-26

The Beatitudes in St. Luke's version of Jesus' sermon differ slightly from St. Matthew's account (Matt. 5:3-11).

But they serve the same purpose. Jesus the Messiah announced the content of his messianic mission through the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes are the summary of that sermon.

The Kingdom of God is offered to the poor, to the hungry, to the unhappy, and to the oppressed classes of society (Lk. 6:20-22). The coming of the Kingdom brings judgment on the rich and the well-fed, those who enjoy privilege and popularity (vv. 23-26).

This message must have astounded those who heard Christ. But in the course of Christian history, this element of grace to the poor and judgment to the rich became watered down. Slowly the Christian Gospel became concerned mainly about the 'other' world. But the other world *is* the Kingdom, which has come and is yet to be fully manifested. This world and the other world cannot be separated so easily.

It is only in our century that we have begun to see this good news to the poor coming within the possibility of realization. Some countries in Europe (East and West) and North America have been able to lift up the poor to a certain tolerable standard of living. Most of the once-poor in these countries have now enough to eat and drink and to clothe themselves with. Luke 6:21 is being fulfilled before our eyes. This has in its turn led to a 'rising tide of expectations' and a 'backlash of frustrations' in most other parts of the world, but perhaps especially in India.

If you examine the context of the beatitudes, you will see the kind of people to whom Christ announced the good news of the Kingdom (Mt. 4:23 ff: Luke 6:17 ff). They were the sick, the afflicted, the paralytics, the blind, the lame; not necessarily the religious and political

leaders or the ruling classes, though they too might have been part of the crowd.

The terms which we translate 'poor' or 'poor in spirit' mean much more than just those who do not have money. The Greek word *Ptochos* (poor man) stands for one who is subject to all kinds of misery and oppression. And it was to such that Christ offered the Kingdom.

'Blessed are you miserables! For yours is the Kingdom of God' (Luke).

'Blessed are the broken in spirit, for theirs is the divine Kingdom' (Mt.).

'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them' (Mt. 11:5 cf: Luke 7:22).

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to announce the Lord's time of acceptance (Luke 4:18-19).

These are all words spoken by Jesus. The passage in Mt. 11:5 is the answer to the implied question. 'How can we recognise the presence of the Kingdom?' The passages in Luke 4:18-19 is the way Christ announced the content of his own mission, and the fulfillment of the promise of the Kingdom. In Luke 14:15-24, the Kingdom is illustrated by the parable of the banquet for the poor. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-28), the hero is a poor man.

St. Paul reminds the Galatians; that an important element of the reconciliation worked out in Jerusalem between the party of James and the party of Paul was that all should 'remember the poor' (Gal. 2:10). Perhaps the Pauline presentation of the Gospel did not emphasize this adequately in the beginning. Later on, the collection for the poor at Jerusalem became a primary concern with St. Paul (Rom. 15:26, II Cor. ch. 9).

St. James, on the other hand, had this concern for the poor from

the beginning (James 2:2-15; see especially James 5:1-6). He says quite Plainly:

‘Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs to the Kingdom But you have dishonoured the poor man’ (James 2:5, 6).

What concretely brings release and rejoicing to the poor and the oppressed is already a sign of the presence of the Kingdom. Blessed are ye poor. For yours is the Kingdom.

QUESTIONS

1. Look up other passages in the New Testament which put the poor at the centre of the Church's Concern, e.g., Acts 2:44-45; 2 Cor. 8:2 ff; Mt. 19:23 ff; Mt. 25:31-45 etc.
2. In what way can we put the poor back at the centre of our concern? By giving more charity?
3. Where are the signs of the presence of the Kingdom today? That is, where do the poor hear good news?

2

Looking for the Coming of the Kingdom

Isaiah 25:1-9

One-third of the world today is nominally Christian. There are almost a thousand million Christians in the world. In India we have some 15 million Christians - Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. What difference does it make? Or what difference should it make to our nation? That is the question. Are Christians supposed to be just another minority group working for their own communal rights and privileges, struggling against the majority of Hindus and Muslims?

In most of the countries of Asia (except perhaps in the Philippines), Christians are a numerically small minority. What is God's purpose for us in our nations? We cannot as Asian Christians look back to a time when 'Christendom' or 'Christian nations' were a fact of history, as Western Christians can.

How do we find a way to become a dynamic presence in our own nation? India, with her poverty and injustice, dishonesty and corruption, hope and frustration, lack of leadership and initiative, is one of the saddest nations of the world today. Is there some good news that we can be and bring to our people?

Christ the King came into the city of Jerusalem seated on a donkey. He came healing and serving. He brought joy to the down-trodden and the oppressed, to the lame and the paralytic, to the blind and the deaf. He came as light for the world in darkness, bringing joy and hope (Jn. 3:19; 12:46). And he said of his disciples, in his great high-priestly prayer, 'As Thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world' (Jn. 17:18). Our presence in the world then has to be on the same lines as that of Christ's.

The Old Testament looked forward to the presence of the Saviour God. The 25th Chapter of Isaiah gives us some understanding of

what the prophet expected to happen when God comes (25:1-2). He has already done 'wonderful things', which are the basis of expecting more wonderful things to happen when He comes in person.

1. 25:2-5: What are the things He has done?

(a) He has judged the mighty nations that were oppressors. This is historically true in part, and in part it is yet to happen. The great empires of Alexander and Julius Caesar, of the Pharaohs and of Nebuchednezzar, of the Portuguese and the Spaniards, have all fallen. Their remains are mostly in ruins today. Even the more recent colonial empires of West European nations are now in the process of crumbling; a new form of economic oppression and exploitation, which we today call neocolonialism, is now spreading, awaiting the judgement of God. The poor nations are becoming poorer, while the rich get richer at the expense of the poor. We do not yet see the judgement of these nations and groups within our own nation but that cannot be far behind. God's judgement of the rich and the oppressor has been partly fulfilled, and still yet awaits full consummation in the future.

(b) God has been a refuge for the poor, the protector of the needy and the oppressed (25:4). This is also partly realised and partly to happen in the future. We see that the working classes in many countries have begun to experience the redemption from oppression and want. But in nations like ours, millions are still poor, still oppressed. There is no shelter for them from the storm of grinding poverty and no shade from the heat of widespread famine.

The kingdom has come in Jesus Christ. The poor have had the good news preached to them. But the total fulfillment is still a matter for future realization.

This future gets some content in the remaining part of Isaiah 25.

II. 25:6 - 8:

(a) The most appropriate symbol of the Kingdom of God is that of a banquet.

(b) Note that the banquet of the Lord is not just for the people of Israel, but for all nations (v.6).

(c) The banquet is rich and sumptuous - not skimpy and bare.

(d) The symbolism of wine is that of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of forgiveness and joy, of creativity and holiness, of righteousness and peace.

(e) The word translated the 'veil' in v. 7 could also mean the 'shroud' - the covering for dead bodies or for mourning people. The symbolism is particularly apt for India, where the 'shroud of gloom' spreads over all areas of our national life. The banishment of sorrow and suffering, misery and pain, belonged to the heart of the Kingdom as the prophets saw it. They expected the coming of the Messiah to be the occasion for lifting the shroud of gloom cast over all nations.

(f) The destruction of death is part of the messianic expectation (v. 8). A gospel that speaks only of material well-being is a perversion of the biblical message. 'Eternal life' is the quality of life that lives in this world without being enslaved by the fear of death, which knows that if this tent of our body is destroyed, we have a heavenly tent not made with hands (2 Cor. 5:1 ff). The Christian concern is not only for the 'good life' in the image of holiday resorts and vacationing centres. The good life, which accepts this world and rejoices in it, is also a life that transcends this world and triumphs over death. The 'wiping away of tears from all faces' (v. 8) means also giving people a transcendent hope, as well as giving them meaning, purpose and sustenance in this life.

III. 25:9: Only when in practice *both* these concerns of the Christians become real to themselves and to others, our talk about God will have any meaning for them. The God for whom India waits is a God who is both interested in and does things for the immediate economic, social and political problems, and at the same time brings victory over death itself; the God who not only punishes in his wrath and forgives in his grace, but the God who dispels famine and want, oppression and exploitation, pain and misery, hatred and dishonesty; the God who judges the oppressor and vindicates the oppressed; the God who gives life to those who live in the valley of the shadow of death.

In India we Christians need to realise the wide range of salvation

that God brings - not just the individual salvation in the 'other' world, but corporate and national salvation here and now as well.

QUESTIONS

1. In what terms have you been taught in the Church to think of Salvation? Is this teaching true to the Bible?
2. How do we understand the messianic expectations of the prophet Isaiah in relation to the hopes and fears of India today?

3

The Nature of the Kingdom

Mt. 13:1-25

The kingdom of God is the central message of the Gospel. In the Gospels, especially in Luke, the verb 'evangelise' has often for its object not people but the Kingdom. To 'evangelise the Kingdom of God' means to proclaim the good news that the kingdom has already come (Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 8:12). In Luke 9:2, Christ sends out the twelve to 'proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal.' When the crowds come to Jesus, he speaks to them of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:11). In the Acts, it is the arrival of the Kingdom of God that is the content of the apostle's message - not any kind of personal salvation in the coming world (Acts 1:3; 14:22; 19:8). Christ asks his disciples to make the object of their ultimate concern the Kingdom of God - 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (food, clothing, shelter), shall be yours as well' (Mt. 6:33).

But what is this Kingdom which is thus the central concern of the Christian Church? The Kingdom cannot be easily defined. It was announced to the disciples in parables. They did not clearly understand. But some were attracted by it, fascinated and drawn to it without knowing fully what it meant. In this and the following study we shall look at seven of the parables of the kingdom, in order to begin to understand the Kingdom in its rich and diverse meaning.

The first of the seven parables in Matthew 13, that of the sower and the different fields, is well-known to us. We need only to draw some lessons for our time from it.

Here the emphasis is neither on the sower nor on the seed, but on the different types of field which receive the seed. The seed is the 'Word of the Kingdom' (13:19), and the field is humanity. Men receive the word of the Kingdom in many different ways and respond to it differently, with different results in their lives. The nature of the personal response is at the heart of this parable. Let us look at the narrative to bring to light some of its essential aspects.

13:1-2:

The Context: Great crowds are around the Master, fascinated by his personality, attracted by his many miraculous acts of healing, arrested by his authoritative presence which dared to question the religious leaders and disputed with them without fear. Many came looking for healing. Others came to be entertained, or out of curiosity. Many might have been attracted because they felt like sheep without a shepherd, and found in this man a true good shepherd. The point is that many came. Why don't the crowds come when our preachers go out to preach? Because the 'signs of the Kingdom' are not there. Words alone cannot draw people. The quality of life, lived in integrity and prayer, disciplined and well-trained, brimming with the power of God that performs miracles - that was the presence of Christ, who could also speak words of power. Today, our words flow, but the quality of life is lacking. So president Radhakrishnan could say, 'Christians are ordinary people making extraordinary claims.' We need to regain that quality of extraordinariness which made the words of Christ and his disciples through the centuries capable of speaking with power.

13:3-8; 18:23:

The different areas of the field where the seed fell have their own qualities.

(a) *The Path* (v. 4) The path typifies the kind of persons who listen to everything, but cannot take things in (v. 19). They are the majority of people in the modern world, where there is so much traffic, so much 'communication' through the mass media, so many comings and goings, so many travels and conferences, so many millions of words poured into one's ears. But it is like a beaten track. Everybody has access to it. It cannot, however, receive the seed, because it is so smooth on the outside, but hard and without any opening to the depths. Most of us have become like that, and the seed of the Kingdom falls on us, but it never takes root in us.

(b) *The Rocky Ground* (vv. 5, 6, 20, 21): This is another kind of superficiality found in many of us. We are eager to receive good

words. We think we have become good Christians simply because we can listen to a good preacher, respond to him emotionally, and generally agree with him (v. 20). Everything goes well when the environment of the college, the religious group, and the spiritual clique is pleasant and congenial for a 'religious emphasis.' But when one leaves the congenial environment and goes into the another society where different sets of values operate, then all the 'religious interest' of the student movement or youth club days disappears. When a small problem or opposition to the 'religious interest' appears, the seed of the Kingdom disappears from the mind. 'Having No depth' (v. 5); too many of us are like that.

(c) *The Thorny Area* (vv.7, 22): This is the kind of commitment to Christ which one tries to keep as one among many other interests. One goes to student movement or religious group activities, as one goes to the tennis or hockey club, to a dramatic society, to the debating society, or to the music club. After a while one finds that many of the other activities are much more interesting and these 'thorns' grow up and choke the seed of the Word. The Kingdom demands total and absolute loyalty. Not that one cannot engage in sports, acting or drama and debate if one is a Christian. The point is that the Christian commitment cannot be put on the same level as these other interests. The other interests have to be integrated from the centre - to the commitment to the Kingdom, to the joy and truth and beauty and justice of God. No single integrating commitment - many of us are like that. And so the thorns choke and destroy.

(d) *The Good Soil* (vv. 8, 23): The mark of the good soil is always its capacity to bear fruit. And let us not misunderstand the 'hundredfold, sixty and thirty' of verses 8 and 23 as referring to the number of 'souls' we save by our personal evangelism. When the Bible speaks of fruit, it always means *righteousness or unrighteousness*, a quality of life, of acts (see Mt. 3:8 ff, Luke 3:8 ff, Mt. 7:16, Mt. 12:33 ff, Rom. 6:22). Gal. 5:22 ff clearly speaks about the fruit of the spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, reliability, humility and inner strength. These are the qualities that the Kingdom ought to create in us. And they are all very relevant to the situation in our nation today.

Christ's Method of Teaching (13:10-17): Christ did not teach the same way as the writer of this present study is doing. He was not always discursive and logical. He often said things which sounded almost absurd and illogical - like asking people to pluck out their eyes if they caused them trouble. Responding to the Kingdom requires a different kind of listening from the manner of listening to our college or public lecturers. It demands a response from the depths, with the will fully engaged, as well as the mind and the emotions. The message of the Kingdom calls in question the logic by which we keep our minds as arbiter and norm for all decisions. The Gospel puzzles and perplexes, in order to open the depths of understanding. Parables are meant to puzzle and to attract only the serious-minded. The great opportunity is there (v. 17). When you are exposed to the word of the Kingdom, what kind of ears do we bring to it (v. 9)? Can we respond from our depths, or are we like the well-trodden path, the superficial soil, or the type with many interests but no integrating principle and commitment? He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

QUESTIONS

1. Does the kingdom of God use a different language and literary form from the class room or public lecture method? In what does this difference consist?
2. Is there a special way of listening and responding to the good news of the Kingdom, different from the way we listen to our lecturers or speakers? If so, what is the difference?

4

More Parables of the Kingdom

Mt. 13:24-52

Here are six more parabolic illustrations of the Kingdom. Let us list the seven parables:

1. The Seed and the different fields (13:3-22).
2. The wheat and the weeds (13:24-30; 36-43).
3. Seed of mustard (vv. 13:31-32).
4. Yeast in three measures of flour (v. 33).
5. The field with the buried treasure (v. 44).
6. One pearl of great value (v. 44).
7. Net which gathered the good and the bad fish (vv. 47-50).

These parables illustrate different aspects of the Kingdom.

(a) In the first four of them one finds the idea of growth. The Kingdom is something which appears in time and spreads or grows. It does not come fully developed.

(b) In 2 and 7, there are clearly the ideas that the Kingdom is present along with the reality of evil, and that there is to be a day of sorting out when the evil will be finally destroyed. Both these parables refer to the 'end of the world' or 'the close of the time' on (vv. 39, 40, 49).

(c) Parables 1, 2 and 7 emphasize the personal element of salvation. The seed that fell on good soil is he who bears fruit (v. 23). The wheat in parable 2 signifies a 'son of the Kingdom' while the weed symbolizes the 'son of the evil one' (v. 38). The symbolism of the good fish and the bad fish in parable 7 is obvious. In our understanding of the Kingdom we must not forget the fact that God does distinguish between good men and evil men (not necessarily between Christians and non-Christians or believers and unbelievers here).

(d) In parables 3 and 4, the corporate aspect of the Kingdom is obvious; but even in 1, 2 and 7, it is implied. In parables 1 and 2, there

is only one field - the world (v. 38). In parable 7, it is one net which gathers all the fish (v. 47). In parable 3, the whole Kingdom is compared to a tree, where the birds of the air can find shelter (v. 32). In parable 4, the Kingdom and the world are as indistinguishable as Yeast and flour (v. 33), completely mixed with each other. Yet we know the Yeast is there, though we cannot see it, and we know that it is transforming the whole of the three measures of meal.

(e) In a sense, there is a contradiction between what parables 2 and 4 say. The second says the process of history is one in which both good and evil are growing side by side - the wheat and the weeds are both growing apace. There is definitely the activity of the enemy who has sown the weeds among the wheat (vv. 25, 28, 39). The process has to be sifted out on the last day, the day of judgement. On the other hand, parable 4 has an element of what is often called universalism - the whole three measures of flour are leavened by the little yeast of the Kingdom. There is nothing to be thrown out. That is the point of having so many parables. The whole truth cannot be fitted neatly into one story. There is mystery and paradox at the heart of reality.

(f) Parables 1, 5 and 6 refer to a certain quality of response and search required in order to see the Kingdom and gain access to it. Parable 1 speaks of the good soil as one who hears the word and grasps it, and is therefore able to bear fruit. Parables 5 and 6 speak of the necessity of staking everything for the sake of the kingdom. The demand for commitment is total and absolute. It is not just believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and therefore knowing that one is personally saved. The demand of the Gospel is insistent. Forsake everything and follow me - friends, family, riches, position, future, career. Let all of that become insignificant in comparison with the one pearl of great price, the field with the buried treasure, to buy which you have to sell everything you have (v. 44). The Kingdom is free, but not cheap.

(g) The illustrations are all chosen from the life of the hearers - the farmer who sows and reaps, the woman at home who mixes dough, the man who plants a tree or buys a field, the merchant of

pearls, the fisherman, and so on. Christ had this uncanny ability to take the most ordinary experiences of life and make them windows on the reality that lies behind and beyond all the sense-data, the presence of the Kingdom of God. We need to recover this ability to see the reality of God in all the events of our contemporary history in India, as well as in all of nature, and to interpret them to others in a way that draws attention to God and to His Kingdom.

(*h*) But we should be very careful not to be too logically systematic in our interpretation of the Kingdom. It still remains an unfathomable mystery. We can only begin to understand and grasp it. It will always be full of surprises. It remains God's Kingdom, and He alone knows what is its final fulfillment. We must retain this sense of essential mystery about the Kingdom. Christ asked his disciples: 'Have you understood all this?' And they said 'yes' (v. 51). But it is clear that none of us fully understand. And therefore he adds that final and eighth parable: 'Therefore every teacher trained for the heavenly Kingdom can be compared to a head of a household, who goes into his treasure - house to bring out new things as well as old' (v. 52). Some of these new things will constantly be coming up in history to challenge our ways of understanding God and His plans. We should be alert at all times to anticipate how the new changing times require new and fresher understandings of the same mystery of the Kingdom which has been in the world from olden times.

QUESTIONS

1. Do the parables challenge and question our usual understanding of the Gospel? If so, at what points and in what way?
2. How do we find a fresh interpretation of the Gospel of the Kingdom that is relevant to the issues of our day and is at the same time true to the Bible?
3. The first four parables were spoken in the presence of the crowds. The interpretation of the first two, as well as of the three last parables, was given only to the disciples (vv. 10 ff; vv. 36 ff). Why?

5

The Presence of Christ in the World

John 16:16-24; 15:4-13

A great mystery is contained in these words of Christ in St. John's Gospel. We should give heed to it. Only so can we avoid misunderstanding the meaning and modes of Christ's presence in the world.

'A short time - and no more you see me; again after a short time, you will see me' (v. 16). The apostles could not understand that.

What is the nature of this 'short time' when we do not see Christ? And when is the end of this short time when we shall behold Him again ?

In any case the time in between is a time of sorrow and suffering (v. 20), at least for Christians - while the world may be making merry on its own. But it is creative suffering - like the labour pain of a woman about to give birth to a child. And the pain, if it is not the pain of despair, must lead to the joy of bringing something new into the world (v. 21).

The time in which the Christian lives is a time for sharing in a life of creative suffering - not for living the easy-going, easily successful, popular and pleasant life.

We can undertake this vocation to suffer in the interests of others, because we have a joy to look forward to when we meet the Master face to face.

But does not the time look long and the work endless? Is it not 2000 years since Christ departed from this earth to 'go to the father'? Has he forgotten us and our world of suffering and injustice, famine and disease, illiteracy and superstition, oppression and exploitation, war and cruelty, poverty and misery?

No, and here is the great mystery for the Church because we do see Him face to face. We rejoice the 'short time' is already over, and

we rejoice in the midst of a life of suffering, and no one can take away the joy from us (v. 22). This is the strange paradox of the Church's life on earth. Christ has come back and is with us. After the risen Lord appeared to the apostles, the apostles 'returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God' (Luke 24: 52).

He said to them before he parted from them, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of this age' (Mt. 28: 20).

The long drag of time becomes transformed for us because of the risen and ascended Christ who continues to be present with us 'to the close of the age.'

But how is He present?

FIRST: *By our abiding in Him and He in us, through love:* 'If you remain faithful to my orders, you will continue to abide in my love. Just as I remained faithful to my Father's orders and so continue to abide in His love. These words I have said to you so that the joy which is mine may be yours as well, so that your rejoicing can become full. And my orders are simple: Love each other as I have loved you. There is no love greater than this - to offer up one's life for those whom he loves' (Jn.15:10-13).

To open our hearts wide to the amazing love of Christ, by which He was willing to sacrifice his own life for our sake - that is our source of joy. From that opening up and positive response to His wondrous love comes the capacity to love others as He loved, and to serve them at the cost of our own lives, our careers, our pleasures, our success in this world, our comfort and our convenience. And when our life becomes one that is continuously opening up to his love, and continuously serving and loving those in need - then His presence becomes real to us. Time becomes no longer something to kill, boring and dragging. Time becomes short; life becomes full of joy in the midst of pain and suffering. This is the true personal faith; we believe not just in order to save our souls. Our souls have been saved by Christ's loving self-sacrifice. To live in that knowledge is the motivation for loving, self-sacrificing service and the source of incessant joy in the midst of suffering.

SECOND: *His presence is through the Holy Spirit:* The Gospels and Acts make it clear that the life, death and resurrection of Christ constitute a series of events which culminate in the outpouring of the Spirit. Christ said to His disciples that when he ascends to His Father, the Spirit would come (Jn. 14:16, 17, 26; 15: 26; 16 :7 ff, etc.). The Spirit is Christ's presence in His disciples, i.e., in the Church. He is the creator Spirit who works from the beginning in all creation (Genesis 1:2), but He is present in a special way in the Church. Through Him Christ is known, and the community of faith is built up in Christ. He is the Spirit that reveals the will of God to the Church, prays through the Church in accordance with the will of God. He fills the community with his gifts, when the community awaits them in faith. He is Christ present in the Church and through the Church to the world.

THIRD: *Christ is present in the world through the actions of his disciples, i.e; the church, in the world:* As our Lord said in His high-priestly prayer: 'Now I am no more in the world, but they (the disciples) are in the world, and I am coming to Thee As thou didst send me into the world so I have sent them into thy world (Jn.17:11-18). The actions of His disciples in the world are to bear the 'name of Christ'; that is to say, they are to be the expressions of the personality of Christ. That is the basic meaning of 'name' in Hebrew - an expression of personality. We are Christ's presence in the world.

FOURTH: *He is present in the righteous actions of all men:* There are several other modes of Christ's presence and action in the world, but one that should not be overlooked is His presence wherever the poor and the oppressed are vindicated; wherever there is genuine love and self-sacrificing service; wherever the goodness, the beauty and the truth of God are manifested in the actions of all men - whether they be Christians or not. He is also present where the oppressor is overthrown, the rich sent empty away, the proud are scattered, the mighty are put down from their thrones (Luke 1:51-53). This is generally spoken of as God's action in history through redeeming love and evil-destroying wrath. But He is present not only through the great historical events, but also through the often unrecorded patient work of ordinary men in ordinary life - whether they be scientists, labourers, farmers, professors, artists or journalists.

Our concern is to be able to discern as well as bear Christ's presence in the world. The two poles of this concern will be the object of our next study.

QUESTIONS

1. The promises of Christ are on the one hand that He would return at the end of the age, and on the other that He is always with us to the end of the age. How do we reconcile these two promises?
2. Are suffering and joy opposed to each other? Or can they both be experienced by the same person at the same time?
3. What should be our attitude to those who are not Christians in the light of the insight that Christ is present wherever justice and righteousness are vindicated?

6

Our Presence in the World The Royal Priesthood of Christ

I Peter 1:22 - 2:10

What is the nature of our task as Christians in a world of poverty and injustice? There is no better phrase that catches the whole of that task as the expression ‘royal priesthood’ which occurs in the present passage. But both words need interpretation.

The expression itself comes from the Old Testament. In Exodus 19:1 and 6, the Lord says to the people of Israel through Moses: ‘If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own special people among all the peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*’ These are the words echoed in 1 Peter 2:5 and 2:9.

The whole epistle of Peter is thought to have been based on a sermon preached on the occasion of the baptism of new converts during the feast of Easter. One can imagine the newly baptised men and women, clad in white robes, assembled probably in one of the Catacombs of Rome before sunrise on Easter Sunday. The apostle stands before them explaining to them the meaning of their baptism, and giving the Christians their commission for life in the world. It parallels the Lord Yahweh giving his commission to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

As in the Sinai covenant, in the Christian covenant of baptism also the first element is the call to *holiness* (1 Peter 1:14 ff). What does it mean to be holy? We are often inclined to disregard the call to holiness altogether, or see it only in negative and pietistic terms.

Hope, Faith and Love are the positive aspects of holiness. The Epistle begins with an affirmation of hope (1 Peter 1:3 ff). Hope is not wishful thinking; a living hope, in the Bible, is the point of orientation of our whole life. It is the looking forward to the coming

of Christ and His kingdom. In 1:13 the apostle exhorts his hearers to set their hopes fully on the grace that is coming at the open manifestation of Christ. Our hope as Christians is centered around the risen Christ, present in the world in a hidden way, to be clearly and openly present in the world at 'the last day.'

In 1:7, the apostle speaks about the need for the genuineness of their faith to be tested by various trials and by suffering. Faith is that quality of strength, reliability, unshakability and freedom from anxiety that comes to us when we are firmly established in the love and grace of God. We can become fully conscious of this faith only when things begin to turn against us, and our usual strength and support is gone. In trials and troubles, in the face of opposition and persecution, the early disciples learned that the power of God supporting them in a hidden and interior way could uphold them against the strongest waves of opposition. The martyr demonstrated the strength of this inner faith by his fearlessness before the oppressive might of the powers of this earth. In India today we need this quality of inner strength which is not afraid of opposition and is full of hope in the face of obstacles, a faith which trusts, and relies upon the power of God to sustain us in trouble and tribulation.

In 1:22, the apostle exhorts the newly-baptised to sincere, earnest, deep, brotherly love. By subjecting themselves to baptismal teaching and by becoming part of a community of love and faith and hope, they have begun to be purified. That purity and holiness has to be continually developed, through sincere and self-sacrificing love towards others. Love in the New Testament is neither a feeling nor just liking others. It is the quality of mutual self-surrender and active concern for the welfare of others.

These three, then, are the positive elements of holiness - (1) hope, looking forward to the coming of Christ, and not to our own success and comfort;

(2) faith, being established solidly in Christ and therefore free from unreliability, dishonesty, anxiety and deceptiveness; and

(3) love, patiently surrendering oneself to others and being actively engaged in their welfare.

The negative aspect of holiness consists in 'not being squeezed into the mould of blind passion' - not being led by one's instinctive desires and lusts (1:14). It is not simply that these passions are sinful. They are actually misleading and deceptive. They promise you gratification, as the serpent promised Eve in the garden of Eden. In the end, however, they deceive. They give you, the moment's pleasure, but not lasting satisfaction. The best of contemporary literature in the west is today devoted to the theme of the deceptiveness of physical passions. Many intelligent men and women in all parts of the world have revolted against the puritanical, restrictive ethics of previous centuries and sought to assert their freedom by taking a positive attitude towards sensuality. For many it was a liberating experience in the beginning. But later one finds it is as enslaving as the puritanical ethics against which one revolted.

The weakness of the puritanical ethics lies in its basically negative framework. It seems to keep on saying: Don't do this and don't do that and you will be holy. But this is basically contrary to the Bible. The New Testament encourages eating and drinking but every negative injunction is followed by a positive demand for utilising our creative energies in the service of others. True holiness is achieved by the combination of hope, faith and love expressed in worship and daily life. Give your strength and time to prayer and worship and the loving service of your fellowmen, and the passions will gradually be conquered.

Our ability to become a 'kingdom of priests' or a 'royal priesthood' is conditioned by this call to positive holiness. *But what does 'royal priesthood mean?*

In the Book of Exodus, it clearly means that the nation of Israel is to serve as a priestly nation on behalf of the other nations of the earth. In other words, Israel, without any special merit on her part, is called to a special degree of intimacy with God. But not for her own sake - rather for the sake of the nations. 'All the earth is mine' (Exodus 19:5). They are to stand before God as a priest for the other nations.

This is also the calling of Christians, of the Church.

We are a people gathered from all the nations of the earth, not because of any special merit in us, but by His gracious calling, to a life of close intimacy with God. That is what distinguishes us from those who are not Christians. Not that we are saved and they are doomed. Rather, we have been given the privilege of knowing Christ, and through Him of living in great, close intimacy with God. But this is a great responsibility as well. We cannot take this call lightly and expect that we will be automatically holy. First we must keep in mind the two poles of our calling, namely, that it is out of His free grace that God has called us, and therefore that the call does not make us any better than others. There is no room for feeling superior to others. Second, our calling is always to an existence on behalf of others, Christians and others. This is what priesthood means. A priest is always one who lives to intercede for others and not for himself. And all of us have been by baptism incorporated into the one eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ who ever lives to make intercession for the whole world. Our priesthood is a part of this ministry of universal intercession.

But holiness is always a call. It demands a responsive action. 1 Peter 1:16 says: 'Be holy, for I am holy.' It is a demand and a gift. The demand is to grow up by the spiritual milk of the word (2:2), to put away all bitterness, resentment, malice and hatred (2:1), to love one another earnestly (1:22), and to come to Christ and to be built up by His Holy Spirit to become an abode of the Spirit and a holy priesthood (2:4, 5), offering up our own lives along with that of Christ on behalf of all men (2:5), and to announce by word and deed the marvellous grace of God that has called us out of the deceptive pleasures of this life, into the joyous light of expectant faithful, loving service and worship (2:9).

QUESTIONS

1. *Examine the whole of the first epistle of St. Peter to see how in apostolic times Christians were asked to conduct themselves as a holy nation. How much of it applies to our times?*
2. *How can our Christian communities become a holy people today in our present situation in India?*

Christian Presence and the Royal Priesthood

(Continued)

John 10:1-18

The priesthood of the Church belongs to every member of it. It is a participation in Christ's priesthood. We have such a highpriest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens (Heb. 7:26), who 'has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf' (Heb. 9:24), who 'holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever' (Heb. 7:24), and 'lives for ever to make intercession' (Heb. 7:25). 'Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace' (Heb. 4:16), 'for we share in Christ if only we hold our first faith firm to the end' (Heb. 3:14).

This is not usually taught in youth movement circles, but this belongs to the heart of our mission in the world. Failure in holiness and in the priestly ministry of sustained intercession for the world lies at the base of our contemporary failure in mission. Our ministry demands the holiness of hope, faith, and love, and the continuing life of disciplined prayer if it is to share in Christ's ministry.

But what exactly does the word 'royal' mean in the expression 'royal priesthood?' In the Old Testament it clearly meant 'a priestly kingdom', on behalf of other kingdoms. But in the Book of Revelation, the concept takes on a new meaning. Revelation 1:6 has at least two versions in the Greek. One version says, '(Christ has) made us (Christians) a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.' Another version says, '(Christ has) made us (Christians) kings and priests for His God and Father.'

In Revelation 5:10, the meaning becomes clear. The four living beings of the vision of St. John fall before the Lamb, and they sing a new song:

“Worthy art thou to take scroll and to open its seals:
 For thou wast slain and by thy blood ransomed for God
 From every tribe and tongue, and people and nation
 And made them into a kingdom and priests to our God
 And they shall reign on the earth.’

The kingship or lordship, as we call it, belongs to Christ the God-man. But it is given to us as well. And it is this kingship which God has given to mankind that forms the second aspect of the mystery of the royal priesthood.

We basically misunderstand the lordship of Christ only as lordship or kingship over us and over the creation. That is true, but not the whole truth. Christ shares his kingship with other men. We share not only in his priesthood, but also in his kingship. We are also ‘royal’ because we belong to the household of the great king.

But we misunderstand the kingship of Christ as well as our own participation in it, if we take our image of a king from the arbitrary rulers of history - Ashoka or Akbar, Alexander or Augustus. The dialogue between Pilate and Jesus is very instructive here. Pilate asks Jesus: ‘Are you the king of Jews?’ (Jn. 18:33). Jesus replies with a question: ‘Are you asking for yourself, or did others say it to you?’ Pilate says something irrelevant in reply, and Christ continues, ‘My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of the worldly kind, then my servants would have fought, so that I would not have been handed over to the Jews. But my kingship does not belong to the same class as the kingship of this world’ (18:36).

The inscription ‘Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews’ does not appear on a throne but on the top of a cross. The Old Testament made a basic distinction between a king and a shepherd. Israel had no king but God, but they wanted one because everybody else had one. Read the amusing story in I Samuel 8:4 ff on how they finally got a king, Saul, head and shoulders above the ordinary people (I Sam. 9:2). But when Saul became an oppressor, God chose a shepherd boy, David, to be king, The Messiah was expected to be a shepherd-king. It is in this light that we have to understand Christ’s description of himself as ‘the good Shepherd.’

The passage in John 10:1-18 describes the qualities of the good shepherd, of the real messianic King. Some of these qualities are to be specially noted, as the exercise of our sharing in Christ's kingship.

1. The shepherd knows the sheep intimately, and calls them by name, and the sheep recognise his voice as a voice that can be trusted, because it always acts in their best interests (10: 3-5).
2. The shepherd leads the sheep out of the confinement of the sheepfold into the wide open pastures, goes before them, and feeds them (10:3, 4, 9, 10).
3. The shepherd stays by the sheep even when the wolves come, face the wolves, and when necessary lays down his life in defence of the sheep. (10:11-15).
4. The shepherd works in order that all the sheep may be brought into one fold (where all can be fed by the same shepherd) (10:16).

1. We need to develop such intimate and detailed knowledge of the world so that we know each sheep by its name. This is not merely academic knowledge of the world, but intimate personal knowledge gained by actual 'living with the sheep.' Our way of life should win for us authenticity. The world should be able to recognise the voice and actions of the church as always speaking in the best interests of the world and not for selfish purposes. We must by our way of life earn our credentials for being respected by the world. This comes from the holiness of hope, faith and love, and from loving, self-sacrificing service to the world.

2. We have always to help in the process of leading men from their confinement into the open field of a better life. We should become pioneers who show the way by daring to do new things, to challenge old confining fears, to lead people into the fullness of life, and be with the world in all its aspirations for food and freedom.

3. Such creative pioneering in finding freedom and food for the sheep will soon invite the wolves who want to feed on the sheep - the oppressor and the exploiter, armed with great power, cunning and

avarice. The Christian community takes the full brunt of the opposition of the wolves, and does not forsake the sheep for fear of the wolves. This identification with the poor to the point of death, in the face of opposition from the oppressor and the exploiter, is an integral part of the royal priesthood.

4. The Good Shepherd and those who share in His shepherdly ministry are anxious that 'there should be one shepherd and one fold.' This means, labouring for the one united Church under the one Shepherd, Christ. But it means more. It means also committing ourselves to one world, a single humanity, in which the welfare and destiny of each member is the concern of all and the welfare of all, the concern of each. To work to establish a single worldwide structure, economic, social and political, with full freedom and diversity, but without injustice, oppression and mutual exploitation, belongs integrally to our royal priesthood.

The royal priesthood thus consists of two elements: (a) the priestly element of a holy or set-apart community which exists for the whole of humanity, grows in holiness by growing in hope, faith and love, and continues in Christ's ministry of intercession, and (b) the pastoral, kingly or shepherdly ministry of identification with the aspirations of the world, close intimacy with all mankind and especially the poor, creative pioneering, fearless facing of opposition even to the point of death, and working for the unity of the Church and for a single worldwide structure of justice and welfare for all humanity.

QUESTION

1. What is the relation between holiness and mission?
2. Can there be true Christian service of our fellowmen which is not sustained by a life of prayer and intercession for them?
3. How can our youth and student groups give expression to the royal priesthood in the conditions of India today?

8

Recapitulation

II Cor. ch. 4

The royal priesthood, which corresponds to the kingly and priestly ministries of Christ, is the aspect of the kingdom given especially to Christians. How in practice do we express this ministry as young people?

The whole New Testament speaks in answer to this question. Let us in this last study recapitulate some of the elements that we have already encountered in the passages so far studied, and in related ones.

(1) *Grasp the meaning of our baptism:* Baptism is introduction into a new life - the life of royal priesthood. This is the life of an ongoing community, the Church, which participates in the eternal ministry of Christ. The first epistle of Peter makes this clear. 'And baptism saves you, not by removal of bodily uncleanness, but the pleading of a clear conscience in the presence of God, through the risen Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, who has entered heaven with angels and authorities subject to him' (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is initiation into the heavenly community which lives in the presence of God, enabling us to join in the service of God. Those who practice Chrismation (Muron) as an integral part of their baptism (and not as a separate sacrament of confirmation) should know that the holy oil anoints them to the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministries of Christ.

(2) *Grasp the kingly priesthood:* The ministry of priesthood is on behalf of the whole creation, and not a means of personal salvation which is already given to us as a free gift. Our fundamental orientation of life then becomes that of the first part of the Lord's prayer. 'Father in heaven, Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as in heaven.' We do not seek any other objective for our ministry as Christians in the world, except this concern for the

coming of God's kingdom over the entire earth. That the hungry may find food, that the oppressed may be set free, that justice and righteousness may be established in society, that the world may rejoice in God - these form our ambition as Christians living in the world.

(3) *Prepare to express the kingly priesthood* - by training for a ministry of self-sacrificing service for the kingdom. If possible find channels for engaging in such service along with others right now. Our service may be in village work, in urban social work, in teaching, in healing, in building, or in pleading the cause of the poor, in labour union work, or in the ordained ministry of the Church. Let our youth and our academic career be a time of training by practice in the art of serving others without dominating them or using them for our own gratification. Let us respect those whom we serve, and consider it our privilege to be able to serve them. The Master came to serve and not to be served. We have the same role.

(4) *Express the royal priesthood* - by engaging fully in the ministry of worship and prayer. Make the Eucharist the centre of our life of prayer. We should not regard the Holy Communion (Holy Mass or Lord's Supper) as an occasion when Christ gives us his grace by feeding us. That is only part of the Eucharist. But primarily it is a participation in Christ's eternal act of self-offering on the cross. When the bread and the wine are lifted up and offered to God in Christ, we are offering ourselves, our bodies, our minds, our souls, our abilities and all we have to God in Christ in an act of loving self-immolation to the gracious and loving Father; not to appease Him, but because He is worthy of all, and our gratitude to Him can be expressed in no lesser way.

In the Eucharist we should learn to offer up the problems of our people and of the whole of humanity to God. We have a responsibility to lift up the sufferings and yearnings of those with whom we live and whom we know well. We must feel in ourselves and directly experience the poverty and misery of our people, and must intercede for the poor and the miserable and the oppressed with deep personal concern. Only that way the service we render to our fellowmen will receive the quality of authenticity. The Eucharist is the mode in which

the sufferings of this world are linked up with the sufferings of Christ on the cross, through the conscious act of the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. But this must become a reality in our worship life, and a reality in our daily life.

(5) *Develop our life of continuing intercession for the world:* Christ is unceasingly interceding for the world. We should participate in this continuing ministry of intercession, not in order that we may spiritually grow, but rather in order that life and joy may come to the dying and the miserable. As busy students and hard-working people, we may not have long hours to engage in sustained prayer. The tempo of our technological civilization demands new forms of prayer life. The most accessible to all today is the habit of 'Ejaculatory' Prayer. This is from time to time to say in the depths of our hearts 'Lord, have mercy on the poor', or such short one sentence prayers, which can be said on any occasion when a lecture gets boring, when we have to wait for somebody, while walking to the college or to our home, etc. The content of these prayers should also become concrete whenever possible, like 'Lord, have mercy on our nation, and deliver us from famine, from corruption' etc. In the early morning, even while remaining awake in bed, we should lift up our hearts to God in loving, adoring thanksgiving and worship. Only thus can the subconscious mind be cleansed.

(6) *Devote our energies to creative service:* Youth is a time when the energy available seems to be in excess of the needs. Tremendous resources of muscular, mental and emotional energy make it difficult for us to control them as we wish. Real growth in the royal priesthood takes place only as we 'yield our bodies to righteousness for sanctification' (Rom. 6:19). The fight against personal impurity and uncleanness cannot be a frontal fight. It can be successful only when we use our bodily energies and emotions to work in the service of others. St. Paul asks us to 'present our bodies as a living sacrifice' to God (Rom. 12:1). The body, with the muscles, the nerves, the mind, the emotions and the will, is to be engaged in the 'spiritual worship' of the royal priesthood. The battle against personal sin is partly won in the fight for social righteousness and in dedicated, devoted service to others.

(7) *Become pioneers with others in bringing freedom and justice in the world:* Let us use our mind and our imagination to find ways of pioneering in fighting oppression and injustice in our societies. The Christian Church started schools, hospitals, and other institutions which have now become the common property of all - including those who are not Christians. This is our continuing ministry in the world - to be pioneers of new forms of good. We are not to imitate the world. 'Do not be squeezed into the mould of this age' (Rom. 12:2-a). Our task is to be transformed ourselves, and become a transforming influence in society, by attesting (demonstrating) what the will of God is for our time and place (12:2-b). When there is black-marketing and hoarding of food in our society, as intelligent students and young people, it is our job to find means to prevent such acts and to expose those who practice them. If our officials and leaders are corrupt, it is our job to bring the corruption to light. But this kind of destructive criticism may be too easy. We must also show new ways of doing things which change the structures of corruption and oppression, and at the same time inspire others to integrity and self sacrificing service. Creative pioneering is the main vocation of a minority Church.

(8) *Finally, be ready to accept failure* - and to lay down our lives with faith, hope and love. Christians should not be naive enough to think that by our pioneering action, our society will become a paradise overnight. The cross was apparent failure, ineffective in saving the world. But out of the apparent failure have come the great movements of emancipation and welfare of our day. We should not anticipate either success or general approval, in direct response to our actions. To act in faith is to be despised and rejected and to fail apparently, as part of the calling of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53).

(9) *In all things render thanks to God, and wait for his full manifestation.* Our job is to work within our mandate, with joy and thanksgiving. His presence, open and unveiled, will also bring the day of final release, final salvation, when the whole earth shall rejoice in the light of God. It is the anticipation of this final, open triumph of God in Christ that makes Christians an extraordinary people who never lose courage (2 Cor. 4:1-11).

(10) To serve these purposes, help to make the Church a creative fellowship, where honesty, integrity and love are the binding forces, and where hypocrisy and mutual competition and deceit no longer rule. 'Come to him (Christ) to that living rock, rejected by men but in God's sight, choice precious; and like living blocks of rock be yourselves built into a house of the Spirit, to exercise the holy priesthood of offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:4-5).

QUESTIONS

1. What are some possible forms of pioneering social action in India today?
2. How can the role of a Christian student or young person be understood within the royal priesthood of the whole Church?
3. How can baptism and its meaning become more of a reality to Indian Christians today?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

(For written work by individual young people, to be read later to a group):

1. If the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5, 6 and 7) is to be taken as an indication of what Christ meant by the Kingdom of God, how would you relate it to the problems of India today?
2. What did baptism signify in the New Testament with its Jewish background? Study in this connection the following passages:

Mark 1:4-11 (compare Mt. Ch. 3)

Acts 19:1-7

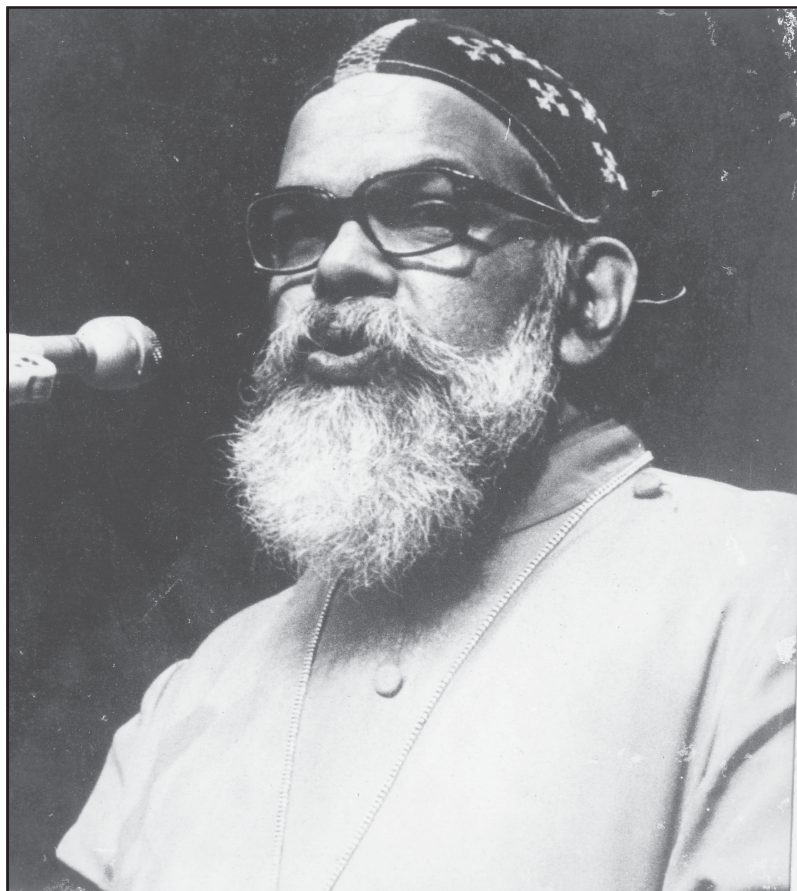
Romans 6:1-14.

3. How does the death and resurrection of Christ become effective for the salvation of the whole of mankind, with special relation to poverty, oppression and injustice? In this connection, try to see the relation between personal righteousness and social righteousness.

Especially see: Mt. 23:23-28; 25:31-46

Romans 2:1-24; 5:15-21

Ephesians 2:10; 4:17-5:2.



Part 2

The Meaning & Nature of Diakonia

1

To Serve and not to be Served

Then the mother of the Sons of Zcbedee approached him along with her two sons, doing reverence to him and asking something from him.

Jesus asked her: "What do you want?" She says to him: "Please say that these two sons of mine will be seated one on your right hand and the other on your left hand, in your kingdom."

Jesus responding said to them: "You do not realize what you are asking for. Are you capable of drinking the cup which I am about to drink?" They answer: "We are able."

Jesus says to them: "Of course you will drink my cup; but to be seated at my right and my left - that is not for me to grant; it is reserved for those for whom my Father has prepared those places."

The ten other apostles were quite annoyed with the Two brothers. So Jesus called all of them to him and said: "You know that the rulers of the nations like to lord it over the people and their leaders like to show off their power over other people. It should not be so with your people. But whoever wants to be great amongst you, let that person be a servant of the others. And if one wants to be the chief, let that person be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but on the contrary to serve and to give his life as the price of redemption for many others."

Matt. 20:20-28 (free but faithful translation)

The context of the sons of Zebedee episode is in Matthew 20: 17-19, and the parable which precedes of the house-holder who paid

the same wages to those who worked all day from sunrise to sunset, to others who came to work at 9.00 a.m., to yet others who were hired at noon, to some who started at 3 p.m. and even to those who worked only for one hour from 5 p.m. (Matt. 20:1-16). It ends with the curiously unjust principle that God can do with God's kingdom what God likes. The implication is that God's justice does not follow the principles we usually attribute to our concept of justice.

The parable of the kingdom ends with two statements difficult to exegete:

Friend, I am not unjust to you. Our contract was for one denarius. Take what is yours by contract and go. But it is my will that I will give to these last ones the same one denarius I give you. Am I not free to give what I want to give out of my own? Are you jealous about my being good to these people? Thus the last will be first and the first will be last (Matt. 20:13b-16).

It is important to remember this. God's justice follows principles quite different from ours.

It is also important that after having narrated this parable, so offensive to our sense of justice, Jesus was about to "go up" to Jerusalem for the great act of *diakonia* - that of laying down his life for others. Jesus calls the Twelve aside by themselves and discloses to them:

"Look, we are going up to Jerusalem. There the Son of Man will be betrayed and handed over to the high priests and law professors; they will condemn him to death, and will again betray and hand him over to the gentiles, to be mocked, to be whipped and finally to be crucified; on the third day he will be resurrected" (Matt. 20:18-19).

Then comes the mother of John and James to plead for special privileges of power, authority and glory for her two sons. She has accepted the requirement that the way to the kingdom was through the cross, at least for the Son of Man, the Messiah. She believed that

the Lord Jesus would rise from the dead to rule over Israel. She and her sons were prepared to pay the price, that of drinking the Messiah's cup of suffering with him. She and they accept the Messiah as the crucified and risen Lord. And one of them, John, is the beloved disciple, a special favourite of our Lord. But she was being fair to her two sons, that both of them should have positions of special privilege, honour and power. She does not want to show any favouritism to one of her sons, as Jesus did. In fact Jesus did something quite special for that one son, the "disciple whom he loved"; Jesus at the cross practically took him away from his own mother and handed him over to Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary in turn to John (John 19: 25-27). John took Mary to his own house (19:27), where she must have lived with John's mother.

It was for this special son and his brother that their mother asked for special privileges. More or less legitimate, isn't it? At least fairly reasonable. Now, the reaction of the ten other apostles also seems eminently reasonable: "We all know that this young man John is a special favourite of the Master. We wouldn't quite be up to questioning the Master about it. Maybe he wants to groom John to be his successor! Who knows? Anyway they had no business dragging their mother into it; and asking for *two* special positions - that is too much. What do those guys think the rest of us are - mere suckers? We too have worked hard, faced much, suffered opposition, left our family and friends to follow the Master, haven't we?"

So went the discussion among the Ten.

It is in this ambience of power-seeking, ambition and jealousy in which all the Twelve are caught up that Jesus drops the bomb: "The Son of Man came to serve, not to be served."

We need to look at the leadership of the churches and the ecumenical movement to see whether we are really much better than the apostles. "We are all Christians (we say), committed and all that. We could all have made better careers if we had gone into secular jobs and vocations. We have made considerable sacrifice to come and serve the church or the ecumenical movement. We are not struggling for power, mind you. All we are asking for is a little recognition."

Nothing has been so divisive of the churches as the ambitions, the jealousies, the power struggles among Christian workers and leaders. Quite unconsciously we fall a prey to that perennial temptation of humanity in the world, the desire for power and position, for worldly glory and honour. And so long as that is our basic orientation, the church cannot be united. There can be neither true unity nor genuine community so long as each thinks of his or her own power and position. Humble diakonia is in fact a central principle of the unity of the church.

Matthew 27:55 tells us that the mother of the sons of Zebedee was one of the people who used their own money to serve Jesus. See Luke 8:1-3, where we are told that these women were serving Jesus as well as the needy out of their own wealth.

The mother of Zebedee was thus already engaged in diakonia when she asked Jesus for the special favour of positions of power and glory. Is that temptation still not with us - that in our very serving we seek power and position?

The missionaries of a previous generation were in that situation. They served the people of the mission field sincerely, and in so far as they did that they had a social position, power and prestige which they would not have when they went back to their own people.

The new missionaries of the interchurch aid empire are in a worse situation. Some of them are stationed among the people whom they serve, but most are only periodic visitors. And they are welcomed so warmly and specially by the people who locally handle their hand-outs. In return for their diakonia they get to sit on the right hand and on the left hand of the powers that be. And if they are not properly received and feted by project-holders, the projects may suffer. There is something radically wrong with that sort of diakonia.

Let me enumerate four necessary conditions of authentic diakonia. Later I hope to show how Jesus Christ is the true deacon, the server and the Son of Man who came to serve and not to be served. I hope the word study will make it clear that the model for Jesus' Messianic ministry itself was the four oracles in Second Isaiah about the Suffering Servant, the '*ebed-Yahweh*.'

The four necessary conditions of an authentic Christian diakonia are the following:

- a) the willingness to suffer with those whom one serves and to give of oneself;
- b) humility as opposed to superiority about oneself, and respect as opposed to condescension towards those to be served;
- c) not using diakonia as an occasion for domination, privilege and rank;
- d) willingness to identify with the served to the point of laying down one's life for their sake.

a) Authentic diakonia should involve more than the giving of money or goods or services, more than the "sharing" of resources and personnel. It demands taking upon oneself the suffering of others. It demands laying aside the sense of self-sufficiency of the server, in order to feel and take on the sense of helplessness and need experienced by the served. The foreign missionaries of an earlier generation were better placed in this regard than the new interchurch aid and donor agency missionaries. The latter do not live among the people they serve, and only from a distance feel the pinch of the need of the poor. Their representatives in the field - those who handle "projects" and "programmes" - are usually much better paid than routine church workers, serve out of their abundance and live lives far removed from that of the poor whom they are to serve.

We need a diaconic structure based in the people of the local church, rather than in the donor agencies or the project-holder networks they have created in their "field." Only then will the church in the locality be able to exercise its diakonia function, largely financed from the resources of the local church people, and largely involving the local Christians themselves suffering with and serving the poor.

The present money-and-project based interchurch aid should thus become more marginal, in order to permit the local church to exercise its diakonia of suffering with people and giving of oneself.

b) Attitudes are all-important in authentic diakonia. The server must respect the served. If diakonia comes out of attitudes of superiority it generates the most unpleasant and unhealthy reactions

from the served. If service makes them feel inferior and dependent, such service cannot be regarded as Christian, for instead of mediating the healing love of Christ, it simply generates resentment and negative feelings of wounded pride. Christian service has no right to anticipate feelings of gratitude or ties of obligation and dependence. The present attitudes create resentment in other cultures, for they force them to sell their dignity for the sake of paltry sums of money that people desperately grab.

c) Diakonia is today often used as a means of domination by creating relations of dependence. Interchurch aid does not quite do what international aid does - namely use aid to capture markets and to exploit people in such a way that many times more than the aid flows back to the aid-giving economy through unjust trade relations. But interchurch aid is used in much the same way as international aid to create "spheres of influence" and areas of economic, political and cultural domination and dependence. This is particularly true of bilateral interchurch aid, but ecumenical aid is not much different, in so far as it represents aid from a sector of the Western Consortium which dominates and exploits two-third world economies.

d) Willingness to lay down one's life for the sake of those served seems to be an acid test of authentic Christian diakonia. At present this seems an extremely remote possibility in the context of international interchurch diakonia. It makes much more sense in the context of the service of a local church to the people around or the people of that nation. Diakonia involves the element of confronting the oppressors of the people whom one wants to serve. This can hardly be done by international interchurch aid, but can be done more effectively by the churches in a locality mutually supporting and reinforcing each other in the struggle against injustice. At this point outside aid can at times be very counter-productive.

If Christ our Lord is the model for authentic diakonia, as we shall see later, then a diakonia which involves no cost to oneself, beyond "sharing money or personnel", can hardly be authentic.

2

‘Abodah - Diakonia - Leitourgia: a Word Study

If the diakonia of death, inscribed on tablets of stone, came with such glory that the children of Israel were unable to look on the face of Moses because of the glorious splendour of his face, steadily fading though it was, how much greater must be the splendour of the glory of the diakonia of the Spirit?

If the diakonia of judgment and condemnation has such glory, how much greater must be the glory of the diakonia of righteousness? The first glory, which was partial and measured, is eclipsed by the far greater glory of that which came after. The first was a fading glory; the second, an abiding glory, is much greater indeed.

Since this is our trustful hope, with great boldness we advance, unlike Moses who had to put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel would not see that this glory tended to fade. Their understanding became hardened and inflexible. For to this day, every time the reading of the Old Testament takes place the veil remains over their minds. The veil is unlifted, for only in Christ it can be removed. Yes, even to this day whenever Moses is read, the veil is over their very hearts. For only when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now that Lord, to whom we turn, is the Holy Spirit. For there is freedom and liberation where the Spirit of the Lord is. And all of us, when we turn with unveiled faces to the glory of the Lord, in us is reflected the same glorious image of God, and we are transformed, from one degree of glory to a higher one, as that glory is transmitted from the Lord the Spirit.

So, it is this diakonia that we have received, which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on us. So we do not lose nerve. But we renounce hidden and shameful ways. We no longer conduct

ourselves with deceit and cunning and dishonesty. We do not falsify the word of God. But in the open manifestation of the truth, without any mask or veil on our face, we present ourselves as we are to everyone's conscience and in the sight of God (2 Cor. 3:7-4:2).

Now regarding the diakonia which is for God's holy ones in Jerusalem, there is no need to say much... The diakonia of this liturgy is not merely to fill up the gaps in their physical needs, but it is a liturgical service, which will well up in many eucharists to God in that community. This diakonia is the demonstration of your own glorification of God; it is an integral part and logical consequence of your acknowledging the gospel of Jesus Christ, and of the generosity of your communion in sharing with them and with others. They in turn in their prayers on your behalf will, glorify God and give thanks because the grace of God has so overflowed to them from you. O what a wonderful, inexpressible gift we have from God! Thanks be to him (2 Cor. 9:1, 12-15).

The Hebrew word '*abodah*', meaning work, service, cult, etc. and its derivatives occur more than one thousand times in the Old Testament. The word '*ebed*' alone meaning "servant" occurs 870 times in the Hebrew Masoretic text. The Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament however does not even in one instance translate the word '*ebed*' by *diakon*; 340 times it is translated *pais* or child; 327 times it is translated *doulos* which later came to mean a slave. In 46 cases the translation is *therapon* or one who takes care of someone; in 36 cases it is *oiketes* or domestic servant.

It may surprise us to know however that when our Lord says that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, the expression clearly in his mind is the Old Testament concept of '*ebed-Yahweh*' or 'Servant of the Lord.' In fact this Old Testament expression "Servant of the Lord" is decisive for coming to an understanding of the New Testament concept of *diakonia*. We have therefore to dwell a little on the evolution of this expression '*ebed-Yahweh*' and the related '*abad*' and '*abodah*.'

'*Abad*' in the book of Exodus (mostly J passages) is worth looking

at, because it defines the purpose of Israel's calling, and therefore the calling of Jesus Christ and his church.

In Exodus 7:16, Yahweh is speaking to Moses:

“And you (Moses) shall say to him (the pharaoh):
 “Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews sent me to you, to say: “Commission (*shalach*, the root from which *shaliach* or apostle comes) my people (‘*ammi*) so that they may offer ‘*abodah* to me (*yaabdu*).”

The Septuagint, translates this thus: *exaposteilon ton laon mou hina moi latreusei*. Now *latreia* and *latreuo* are the Septuagint words for cultic worship. The same expression coming from Yahweh through Moses and addressed to the Pharaoh is repeated in Exodus 9:1, 9:13 and 10:3. In the English RSV it occurs also in 8:1 and 8:20, but I do not find it in the Hebrew or Greek texts.

Repeatedly thus, the purpose of the Exodus is clearly stated: that the people of Israel are to go out of Egypt in order to render ‘*abodah* or *latreia* or worshipful service to Yahweh. This is the original vocation of Israel - to be a worship-offering servant.

After the first four plagues hit Egypt (Nile-water turning into blood, Exo. 7:20; the plague of frogs, 8:6; the plague of gnats, 8:18; great swarms of flies, 8:24), Pharaoh changes his mind and says to Moses and Aaron: “Go, make your sacrifice to your God within the country itself” (8:25). Clearly the Pharaoh understands that the people want to make a sacrifice to their God; but he wants them to do it in Egypt. The fifth, sixth and seventh plagues still did not change Pharaoh's mind. Only after the locust plague finished off what was left by the hail-storm, there was a change of heart, first in Pharaoh's servants who plead with Pharaoh: “Let the menfolk go so that they may offer ‘*abodah*’ (*ya abdu*) to “Yahweh their God” (10:7). Pharaoh agrees to let just the men go. Moses insisted that all had to go - the little ones and the cattle included. ‘*Abodah*’ was to be offered not just by the menfolk. It was the whole of Israel, with all their cattle, that is to offer ‘*abodah* to Yahweh. The cattle are needed for the ‘*abodah*’ (10:26) for the sacrifice which forms an integral part of Israel's service to God.

I want to draw our attention to an element overlooked in our Old Testament studies. We have a conception of the Old Testament as centred around the Law on the one hand meaning mainly the Ten Commandments, and the prophetic call for righteousness on the other. Then by introducing a supposedly Pauline contrast between the Law and the Gospel, we write off the Law. But liberal Protestantism is anxious to retain the element of *mishpat* or prophetic justice as an essential element of Christianity. It does not very often notice the contradiction between the rejection of works - righteousness on the one hand, trusting only in justification by faith, and on the other hand demanding works - righteousness creating social justice.

My point here, however, is something else. Why do we see so much of the prophetic call to justice and so little of the '*abodah* or cultic-sacrificial service, with which the Old Testament is saturated? In order to get a balanced view of Christ's diakonia we need to take seriously this '*abodah* element which was central to the life of the Jewish people.

Moses is a prophet - in a sense the prophet, an *ebed-Yahweh* par excellence of the Old Testament. He was a prophet because he had stood before the Lord on the top of Mount Sinai and had received the word directly from the Lord. The standing before the Lord made Moses' face to shine. Exodus 34:29b says: "Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." But that shining has to be renewed every day, by his going into the Tabernacle of Meeting, and facing God, doing '*abodah* to Yahweh (Ex. 34:31-35). Moses received from Yahweh not merely the Ten Commandments. Read Exodus again, about "the thing which Yahweh commanded you to do." We have the six days for the ordinary work, which is also called '*abodah* and then on the seventh day, as the Sabbath Israel is to do the '*abodath-Yahweh*, ceasing from ordinary '*abodah* in order to devote themselves entirely to the Lord's '*abodah*. The whole of Exodus chapters 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 to the very end of the book, the commandment of the Lord is about the '*abodah* of the tabernacle. And all the people, men and women, cooperated.

"All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything to the '*abodah*

which Yahweh had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as their free will offering to Yahweh” (Ex. 35:29).

And what is the whole book of Leviticus about? We are blind to this because of the anti-clericalism and anti-ritualism bequeathed to us by the French Revolution and the European Enlightenment. Leviticus is totally the book of *'abodah*. And we cannot understand *diakonia* without the background of the Old Testament *'abodath-ha-mishkan* (the 'abodah of the tabernacle - Num. 3:7) or the *'abodath-ohel-moed* ('abodah of the tent of meeting).

In fact, in the Old Testament the contract or covenant, the *berith*, is characterized by two central relationships between two unequal partners. The senior or superior partner covenants to show *hesed*, or steadfast, unflinching, dependable love and mercy to the junior or inferior partner. The latter on the other hand keeps the covenant alive, reminding themselves, through the *'abodath-heikal* or service of the temple, that service, that *Gottesdienst*, was the characteristic expression of the covenant, just as the eucharist is the covenant expression for Christians - the blood of the covenant shed on Calvary. “As often as you do this, you show forth the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

We need first to understand, in grappling with the concept of *'abodah-diakonia*, that we cannot limit it to preaching the word and doing social action. There is another element, when we all turn to the Lord in the ritual action of the eucharist. The greatest meanings, not exhaustible by words, are contained in this ritual act of the church. The eucharist is the church’s *'abodah-diakonia* par excellence, which empowers us and qualifies us to speak and act, just as Moses had to go back into the presence of Yahweh, in order to be able to face the people, time and again.

Numbers 4:47, in the English translation, conceals the centrality of *'abodah*. What we read as “to do the work of service”, reads in the original Hebrew: “*la'abod 'abodath - 'abodah*.” The tribe of Levi functions on behalf of the whole congregation. The *'abodah* of the tabernacle belongs to the whole people and not just to the priests.

Twice the expression is repeated in Numbers 3:7 and 8: “the people of Israel minister at the tabernacle” (see also Num. 16:9, 18:6, 1 Chron. 28:20-21).

It is this *'abodah* of the tent that would make the people of Israel a true *'ebed-Yahweh*, who can also become the light of the gentiles. And it is in this context that we should read 2 Corinthians 3:7-42.

In the new diakonia of glory, as contrasted with the old diakonia of judgment, there is a new temple and a new *'abodah*. That was what Stephen the first martyr began speaking about when he was hooted and booed and finally stoned - the temple not made with hands (Acts 7:44-50). This is the temple about which our Lord spoke on the occasion of cleansing the Jerusalem temple. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). It is the temple of his body that he spoke about (John 2:21). It is this temple which is “my father’s house” (John 2:16) in which there are many abiding places (John 14:2), the place which he went to prepare for us (John 14:2, 3). This is the temple about which St. Paul spoke: “Do you not know that you (plural) are God’s temple (singular) and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). This is the temple, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole edifice is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built up into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:20-22). This is the temple to which Peter invites us: “Come to him, that living stone, rejected by men, but in God’s sight, elect and priceless: and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:4-5). This is the temple of which the author of Hebrews speaks as the “greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands” (Heb. 9:11).

The prophetic and the cultic are not opposed to each other. The cultic is the true matrix of the prophetic. Much of our prophetic speaking and social action suffers from this lack of a face that shines with the exposure to God. The truly prophetic will spring out of the truly cultic, when we learn how to tend this growing edifice of the new temple.

The WCC will be making a big mistake, whether in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development, or the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, in women's work or youth activities, in the training of the laity or in ecumenical leadership training, if we overlook this aspect of the face-changing inner transformation wrought by participation in the Spirit's edifice-building activity. If the body of Christ is not built up by the gifts of the Spirit, there can be no Christian diakonia.

But this is not just a matter of singing new hymns to new music. We have inherited this verbal fixation from our Enlightenment background. We will need to come to terms with symbol and ritual if we are to experience face-changing worship. We will have to shed our anti-cult, anti-ritual prejudices inherited from a neo-platonic non-incarnational spirituality and false opposition between the material and the spiritual.

In the 33rd and 34th chapters of Exodus, there is a somewhat amusing request from Moses to Yahweh: "Please show me your glory (*kebodeka*)" (33:18). And Yahweh replied: "I will parade before you all my goodness (*kol-toobi*); I will proclaim before you my name 'Yahweh'; I will show grace to those to whom I want to be gracious; I will exercise mercy to those to whom I want to be merciful." "But", Yahweh continued, "you are not capable of seeing my face. For no human being can look at it and survive." And again Yahweh said: "Here, there is a standing place for you. You stay there on yonder rock. And as my glory passes over you, I will set you up in a ravine in the rock. I will stretch my hand and cover you, until I pass over you. Then I will remove my hand; then you shall see my back, but my face is not to be seen."

Moses had to come back the next morning, and Yahweh did as he had promised. What Moses saw was but the tail of the trail of the glory of Yahweh, which had passed on. And yet his face shone from that exposure. The same Moses had been caught up in the glory of the Lord earlier (Ex. 24:15-18), when that glory came down as a cloud on Mount Sinai and Moses actually entered the glory of the Lord, by entering that cloud.

If our diakonia has to become authentic we will need to do some of the things Moses did, purify and sanctify ourselves, fast for forty days and nights and finally enter the cloud of the Shekinah of Yahweh. That is where the transforming vision takes place - in that cloud of unknowing.

The church as the 'ebed-Yahweh, as the true deacon of God, will need to learn to enter the cloud of God's presence and experience God's self-transforming glory - in the new temple, the spiritual house of the church. It is only from that temple that true diakonia can emerge.

3

Diakonia - Building and Tending the Temple of God

And he (Christ ascended) gave gifts - to some to be apostles, to some prophets, to others the gift of being evangelists, to others to be shepherds and teachers - all this for the purpose of equipping the baptized holy ones for the work of diakonia, i.e. for the upbuilding (oikodome.) of the body of Christ. The purpose is that all of them together may grow up into a single one - in the unity of faith and of unitive knowledge of the Son of God. Thus all are to become one mature humanity (a full-grown human person) whose measure is the fullness of Christ. This is in order that this new humanity should no longer be babies tossed about and pushed around by all the various winds of teaching that spring from the cleverness of human beings in their astute intellectual effort leading only to self-deception. What we are all expected to do is to be true in love, so that all grow towards him and in him; for he, Christ, is the Head. It is from him as controlling element that the whole body is coordinated and linked together in harmony, through the mutually connecting joints provided in the body, and through each part fulfilling the function assigned to it. The same Head ensures that the whole body grows and builds itself up through love (Eph. 4:11-16).

So keep in mind that you were once gentiles according to the flesh-perspective, called the uncircumcized by those who were circumcized in the flesh by human hands. At that time you were without Christ, alienated from the polity of Israel, the chosen of God. You were strangers to the covenants of hope,

and so you had no hope; you were godless in the world.

But now, you who were then far (from God's presence and from God's chosen people) have in Christ Jesus been brought in to be near, brought in by the blood of Christ. He, Christ, is our peace-offering who makes both gentiles and Jews one, tearing down the wall that separated them into fragmentation and mutual hostility; by his own crucified flesh he cancelled all the dogmatic commandments of the Torah, in order to create One New Humanity out of the two after making peace between them. And both are now reconciled to God in one body by the cross which kills all enmity. Then he came and proclaimed to you the good news of peace and reconciliation - peace to you who were far and peace to you who were already near.

It is through this crucified and risen Christ that we both now have access, in one Holy Spirit, to God the Father. Since we have this access we are no longer strangers or resident aliens, but full citizens of the polity of the Holy Ones, and therefore members of the family of God. We are built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as chief cornerstone. In Jesus Christ the whole edifice (pasa oikodome) is growing in a coordinated and harmoniously inter-related way; this edifice is Christ's body, a holy temple in him; you are also built in and incorporated into this temple, so that the whole temple becomes the presence and, dwelling of God by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:11-22).

These two passages from the Ephesian epistle bear witness to a developed understanding of the Christian message by the mature apostle Paul - mellowed by suffering, frustration and struggle but rejoicing in hope in the midst of tribulation.

This more mature thought of the doughty apostle to the gentiles needs considerable probing before we modern children of the European Enlightenment and inheritors of a distorted one-sided rationality can come to terms with it.

Our present concept of diakonia is often more the product of this rationality than of a mature Christian understanding. In order to come to terms with the biblical understanding of *'abodah-diakonia* we need to get two rich biblical symbols in focus - the symbol of (a) "the tent of God in which the shekinah of Yahoveh abides", and (b) "the up-building of the Temple made without hands."

These are both symbols central to the Bible and to the diakonia of Jesus the Christ. They together constitute the central symbols of the incarnation of the Son of God.

The Hebrew word *'shekinah'* comes from the verb *shaken* or *shakan* which means "to settle down, to dwell, to rest, to lie down, to abide." As for Yahweh's dwelling, it is in eternity - not in time or space. Isaiah 57:15 speaks of the "High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy." Yahweh tells us where God dwells (same verse): "I dwell in the High and Holy and also in one who is bruised and lowly-in-spirit to lift up the spirit of the lowly and to lift up the heart of the bruised."

God's "natural habitat" is thus dialectical - on the one hand in the inaccessible heights of holiness beyond time and space, and on the other in the bruised and the broken-hearted.

Both dwellings or "presences" of God are God's *shekinah* or *shekinath* (plural). This is not transcendence and immanence as we too easily talk about in theology. It is God's dialectical dwelling. It is not a question of spatio-temporal transcendence as a going-beyond, nor is it immanence in the spatio-temporal sense. It is presence, dwelling, settling down, resting and abiding - God's *prosopon*, God's *shekinah*, God's face or personal presence - the *penei* - *Yahweh* or *panai* of Exodus 33:14 ("My presence will go with you") and Psalms 41:14, 42:12, and 43:5 in the Hebrew text.

This "personal presence" or indwelling of Yahweh the Holy One

is what makes Israel holy. Holiness fits in with the dwelling of God, and it is the dwelling of Yahweh that creates the Holy of Holies. "Make yourselves holy and be ye holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, 45). It is God's *dwelling* that makes a person, place or thing holy - not, as many commentators say, *being set apart* for the exclusive use of God. The holiness of Israel did not come from their being set apart for Yahweh's use - it is the presence and indwelling of Yahweh that made the people of Israel holy. In our relationalistic age we think of holiness in functional terms. But the biblical witness interprets holiness in terms of the presence and indwelling of God.

If Christians are "saints" or 'holy', it is not because they are set apart for God, but because God indwells them, because God's presence is in them.

Once this central aspect of God's indwelling is fully grasped we can move on to the tent or temple symbolism in the Old and New Testaments. The tabernacle or worship tent for which detailed instructions were given to Moses on Mount Sinai by Yahweh is the heart of the symbolism of God's abiding in and among humans.

Exodus 40:1 tells us about the erection of the "tabernacle of the tent of meeting" on New Year's day (first day of the first month). This J passage speaks of the *mishkan ohel-moed* (see also Ex. 39:32) - literally the "abode of the tent of meeting at set time." It is also called just *ohel-moed* (the tent of appointed meeting) (Ex. 27:21; 40:22, 24) where the symbolism demands that a lighted lamp of pure gold should permanently be burning (Ex. 27:21), and the table with the "'bread of the presence" (*lechem-ha panim* - literally "bread of the faces", Ex. 35:13; 39:36) should be perpetually there. The light and the bread are both symbols of the presence of God.

There were other symbols of the presence - the golden altar for offering incense (Ex. 39:38, 40:5), the anointing oil with which all the tabernacle and its utensils were anointed (40:9), symbolizing the presence and sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit; the bronze altar for sacrifices; the laver for washing (40:7), the priests' vestments, especially the "holy crown of pure gold", marked "Holy to Yahweh" (*godesh leyahweh* - 39:30), and Aaron himself, anointed with the

holy oil, becomes a symbol (40:12ff.).

The central symbol was the “ark of the testimonies” (*aron ha-ethoth*), the acacia wood box, 45” x 27” x 27”, covered with solid gold inside and outside, with a solid gold lid 45” x 27” (Ex: 37:1ff.).

A summary of the total complex of symbols is given in Hebrews 9:1ff. This summary is probably based on the Exodus account but gives us the additional information that inside the “ark of the covenant” (*kiboton tes diathekes*), there were also, in addition to the two slabs with the ten commandments which the Exodus account mentions, also a golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod which budded (Heb. 9:4).

The great symbol is perhaps the lid of the ark - called *Kapporeth* (atonement) in Hebrew and *Hilasterion* (mercy-seat) in Greek. This symbol is associated with the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, who is called the mercy-seat (Rom. 3:25). This is, in a sense, the presence of God par excellence - in forgiveness, mercy, atonement and reconciliation.

As I have said, we are children of Enlightenment rationality, word-oriented rather than symbol-responding. So we have inhibitions in responding to this very rich symbol system to which Moses gave the highest importance. The two tablets of the Torah found their place within this symbol-system, inside the ark of the covenant, and not independently of it. It was at Yahweh’s explicit and detailed command that the symbol-system of the tabernacle was set up. The book of Exodus devotes 16 chapters to the tabernacle and its arrangements (25-40).

The tabernacle and its successor the Temple in Jerusalem continue to occupy a central place throughout the Old Testament. The priests, the Levites, and the Temple play as important a role in the Old Testament as the prophets do. The Temple occupied the locus of loyalty for all Israelites wherever they lived, and all Israelite males were under statutory obligation to “appear before the Lord” three times a year, for the major festivals (Ex. 34:23).

The tabernacle was later set up at Shiloh (Josh. 18:1, 1 Sam. 1:21)

and Shechem (?) and in Baale-Judah (2 Sam. 6:2), or Kereath-Jearim) 1 Chron. 13:6) until David brought it to his new city Jerusalem, where it for a while rested in a tent (2 Sam. 6:17, 7:2, 1 Chron. 15). Solomon built the house for the ark of the presence (1 Kings 6). The building of this three-storey temple of cedar and hewn stone, as well as its elaborate dedication, again receives lengthy treatment in the Book of Kings. This temple, unlike Moses' Tabernacle, was built with forced, not voluntary, labour (1 Kings 5:13ff.); 30,000 workers had to be conscripted, in addition to 70,000 transport labourers and 80,000 hewers of stone, under 3,300 superiors. The description extends to several chapters in the Book of Kings (1 Kings 5-9) and in the Book of Chronicles (1 Chron. 13-17, 21-25, 28-29, 2 Chron. 2-8 etc.).

King Jehoshaphat, several generations later, repaired the temple (2 Kings 12). Jehoshaphat was one of the few kings of Judah and Israel about whom the scripture says: "Jehoshaphat did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days" (2 Kings 12:2) and credit is given to his priest-adviser, Jehoiada. The same is said of Hezekiah who repaired the temple (2 Chron. 29).

The third repair job of the Temple was undertaken by King Josiah, the great reformer (2 Kings 22, 2 Chron. 29, 34:8ff. etc.). It was in the process of repairing the Temple that the scroll of the law of Moses was rediscovered, leading to a new religious renewal (2 Chron. 34:14ff.).

It was this twice-repaired temple that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed, burned and razed to the ground (2 Kings 25). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are devoted to the rebuilding of the Temple and its walls.

The prophetic witness, such as in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, also makes frequent reference to the Temple. So do some of the minor prophets. For example Haggai's prophecy centres around the rebuilding of the temple. So does that of the prophet Zachariah (cf. 1:16; 4:9; 5:12ff., 8:9, etc.).

However, parallel to this demand for the symbol-structure of temple and priesthood, there is also the demand for social and personal righteousness. It is a mistake, however, to assume that the cultic and

the prophetic are opposed to each other in the Old Testament. The prophetic testimony may make light of fast and sacrifice, but it never says anything against the symbol structure of the Temple. In fact the prophetic testimony reaffirms that symbol structure.

We are mistaken in reading back our Enlightenment rationalism-ethicism into the prophetic testimony of the Old Testament. Our anti-clericalism and anti-cultism are inherited, not from the New or Old Testaments, but from the European Renaissance-Reformation-Enlightenment syndrome.

The Temple is at the heart of the Old Testament. It is the service of the Temple that is pre-eminently called *diakonia* or '*abodah*' in the Old Testament. One whole tribe (the Levites) from among the twelve tribes of Israel is set apart for the work of the service of *diakonia* of the Temple.

The Temple symbolism begins to reveal more of its meaning content in the New Testament. And to this we now turn in order to clarify the meaning of *diakonia* for Christians.

The temple in the New Testament

Let us first consider the testimony of our Lord himself. We see that this testimony goes back to the infancy narratives.

In the Lucan narrative, the Temple is the locus of the annunciation to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, the fore-runner of the Messiah (Luke 1:8ff.). The entry of Jesus into the Temple as an eight-day old infant is also given prominent treatment (Luke 2:22ff.). Anna, the 84-year old prophetess, was a permanent resident of the Temple, so to speak (Luke 2:37). Joseph and Mary, living in Nazareth, took Jesus every year to the Temple for the feast of Passover (2:41), and at the age of 12 Jesus stayed in the Temple, forsaking his earthly guardians. When the parents finally claim Jesus, he says to them: "Did you not know that I must be in *my father's house*?" (Luke 2:49).

This expression "my father's house" used by the 12-year-old Jesus seems to occupy a central place in Jesus' understanding of his own role as Messiah.

In the Johannine account, the first major teaching act of Jesus after the wedding in Cana is the cleansing of the Temple. "And he said to the sellers of pigeons: Take away these from here. Do not make my Father's house a trading house" (John 2:16).

This "my Father's house" takes some significant shifts in meaning in the Johannine account. When the Jews asked the question: "What authorizing sign do you show us for this?", the answer was: "Tear down this Temple and in three days I will raise it." The evangelist goes on to say: "This he said in relation to the *temple of his body*" (2:21).

This trans-metaphorical identification of the Temple and Christ's incarnate body takes on further meaning-shades with the last great discourse in the Johannine account.

In *'my Father's house'* many are the abodes. If it were not so, would I have said to you that I am leaving in order to make ready a place for you? So if I leave and prepare a place for you, I will naturally come back and receive you to myself, so that where I am there you can also be (John 14:2-4).

This indeed is the purpose of the incarnation - to prepare the place of the new temple for us. The death of Christ and his resurrection and ascension, as well as the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, are all to be seen as stages in "preparing the place", or "building the Temple" of Christ's body.

This seems to have been the point of our Lord's words: "Dwell in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). Here however the image has shifted from that of the body to that of the grapevine.

The Temple-body metaphor is central in the first Christian martyr's testimony. In Acts 7 we have the text of Stephen's speech, probably recorded by St Luke or St Paul as eye-witnesses. Stephen starts with God's appearance to Abraham and the experience of the people of Israel, but soon shifts to the Temple metaphor. In 7:44 the theme of the "tent of witness" becomes central to his speech. It was made according to a design given by God.

By 7:48 Stephen made the *tour de force* which cost him his life. He openly said that God does not dwell in temples made by human beings, temples of brick and mortar. It was heard by the pro-temple majority in his audience as an indictment of the Jerusalem Temple. Immediately after saying that "Solomon built for God a house", he stated that the Most High does not dwell in "manufactured" entities. He was about to speak of the "un-manufactured temple" of the body of Christ, when his audience ostensibly became enraged and started booing.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says (3:5):

"Moses was faithful in the whole house of God as a servant; but Christ was faithful in his house as a Son; whose house we are."

The whole epistle seeks first to point to the symbol system of the Temple and then to the reality which is signified by that symbol system.

The theme is ubiquitous in the New Testament. The first epistle of Peter exhorts Christians to become living stones built into the living Temple of the body of Christ - "the spiritual house" (4:17).

We see the teaching very clearly in St Paul's writings:

Don't you know that you (plural) are God's temple (*naos Theou*) and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone tries to break apart God's temple, God will break him apart. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you (plural) are (1 Cor. 3.16-17).

Again:

what, do you not know that your (plural) body (singular) is the temple of the Holy Spirit in you, which body you have from God, and is not your own? Your body was purchased at a great price. Glorify God therefore in your body (1 Cor. 6:19).

Also:

what common foundation (*sunkatathesis*) has the Temple of God with idols? We are the (living) Temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16).

It is in the context of these affirmations that we have to look at the Ephesian passages for our study. It is the service (*'abodah, diakonia*) of this Temple that constitutes true diakonia.

Oikodome as diakonia

The living temple, which is also a growing temple, needs building up. We Christians are baptized for this diakonia. On the one hand, we are to grow with the living temple; on the other, we must help the living temple to grow.

It is this process that the New Testament calls *oikodome*. This is the central task of the church, for which the various gifts or *charismata* of the Spirit are given to the church (Eph. 4:11). No charisma of the Holy Spirit is given for the private enjoyment of the recipient.

1 Corinthians 12 is the *locus classicus* of the discussion on the charismata of the Holy Spirit. And the *charismata* are the key to *oikodome* or upbuilding. One of the questions put by the Corinthian Christians to the apostle Paul was about the comparative values of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit - especially the gift of prophecy and the gift of speaking in tongues. And St Paul gives an unequivocal answer to their question in 1 Corinthians 14:5:

“The one who prophesies is greater than the one speaking in tongues, except when it is interpreted, so that the church receives upbuilding.”

On what basis does St Paul give such a judgment? What is the criterion of apostolic assessment? It is given in 1 Corinthians 14:4:

“The speaker in tongues edifies (*oikodomei*) oneself. The one who prophesies upbuilds (*oikodomei*) the church.”

In other words the criterion of assessing the comparative advantages of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit is simply the degree to which they build up the Temple of God, the body of Christ, the church. If a gift serves only to build up oneself, it is not to be so highly estimated. All gifts are given for the purpose of upbuilding the whole edifice.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good or common usefulness” (1 Cor. 12:4).

In the apostle's mind, the *charismata* and the *diakonia* are coordinated, along with the energy for the operation or *energemata*. All three are given in the plural. There are various gifts, various services and various operations, but behind all of it is the same Holy Spirit doing the *oikodome* or upbuilding of the living temple of God.

“There are distinctions among the *charismata* (gifts), but the Spirit is the same One. And there are distinctions among the *diakonai* (services), but the Lord (who serves) is the same One. And there are distinctions among the *energemata* (the operational energies), but it is the same God who energizes all these operations in all” (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

All three are geared to the upbuilding of the Temple of God. The various *diakonai* or services are all dependent on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and on the energizing power of God which operates through the various services.

The difficulty with much that goes by the name of *diakonia* in the church is precisely this dissociation from the *charismata* and the *energemata*. When *diakonia* becomes simply a matter of efficient organization unempowered by the *charismata* and the *energemata*, dissociated from the *oikodome* or upbuilding of the body of Christ, it can no longer be Christian *diakonia*. It becomes another service operation like those in the world and those run by governments and voluntary agencies.

It is hence very important for the World Council of Churches as well as for the member churches to go back to the roots of *diakonia* in the 'abodah' of the Old Testament, in the 'abodah' of the Suffering Servant, and in the *diakonia* of upbuilding the living Temple of God, so that it may bear fruit for the glory of God.

The more interchurch aid becomes a set of donor agencies and aid-receiving projects, the less it will be related to the upbuilding of the life of the living Temple of God.

This has actually happened. It happened before in the life of the missionary movement when it became independent of the life of the "sending church" and became a matter of voluntary organizations called "missionary societies." But at least at the other end the missionary societies kept in touch with the nascent church and received nourishment from it.

We have now a situation where donor agencies and project-holders have only a very limited relationship to the communities of faith at home and abroad. The old missionary empire which functioned as a para-church beside the official churches is now replaced with an interchurch empire largely alienated from churches in aid-giving and aid-receiving countries.

Unless interchurch aid diakonia is reintegrated with the life of the worshipping communities in all countries, it cannot be recipient of the true operations of God geared to the upbuilding of the church.

Oikodome for diakonia

Diakonia is an essential aspect of *oikodome*, and should always keep the latter in mind. But *oikodome* or upbuilding itself is for diakonia. This is the dialectical relationship between the two.

Upbuilding of the church for its twofold ministry is the central task of the World Council of Churches. One is aware that this way of looking at the church's task is unfamiliar to the Reformation tradition. Strangely enough, it is unfamiliar also to the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions.

Yet it is an eminently biblical approach. It is the central idea in the writings of the apostles John, Paul and Peter in the New Testament, as we have shown. The reason why it does not appeal to many modern Christians can be traced to the prejudice against church and clergy inherited from the European Enlightenment rationalism.

Oikodome or upbuilding of the church is always *for* and *by* its double diakonia: the service of God in worship on behalf of the people of the world and the service of fellow human beings in the name of God. As the church truly fulfills its double mediation - the prayers and aspirations of the world to God, and God's grace and love and

mercy and compassion as well as the gospel to the non-Christian world - it will be built up.

It is as the church fulfills its royal priesthood as mediator between God and God's world, interceding, participating in Christ's self-offering to God the Father, and in God's self-giving through Christ to the world, that the church's unity is built up.

This twofold diakonia is implied in the very basis of the WCC, though perhaps not the element of upbuilding or *oikodome*. If the diakonia concept in the Reformed and Lutheran tradition can be redeemed and made to have both its senses, that is, towards God and towards humanity, the twin aim of the WCC would be better served - unity and service. Diakonia as worship of God and the upbuilding of the church for its double diakonia have been the two central emphases for which the WCC has been groping for some time now. If it can grasp this now, and transform its programme and structure accordingly, these could lead to the much-needed renewal in the World Council of Churches and in the church of Jesus Christ in general.

For it is the Spirit of God who is living in us and working through us. And the greatest gift of the Spirit is love - *agape*. There is no gift as potent as *agape* for the purpose of *oikodome*. Love builds up.

The Diakonia of the Suffering Servant - the Royal Priesthood

The diakonia of the Suffering Servant

My effort is not to place any obstacle in anyone's way, in any way, so that the diakonia may in no wise be faulted. No, on the contrary, we as God's deacons (or, as stated in 5:20-21, as ambassadors on behalf of Christ) want to present our credentials to you - in great and patient suffering, in afflictions, in want, in narrow escapes, in calamities, in beatings, in imprisonments, in toil and turmoil, in sleeplessness and hunger - but also in clean dealings, in full knowledge, in patience, in goodness, in the Holy Spirit, in unfeigned love, in the word of truth, in the power of God, clad with the armour of righteousness on the left and the right; taking glory and dishonour alike; in bad repute as well as good; treated as imposters or as honest, as unimportant or as recognized, as dying, and yet we live; as tormented but we do not die; as weeping and yet we are full of joy, as poor but making many rich, as having nothing, yet owning all (2 Cor. 6:3-10).

We need constantly to repeat to ourselves that behind the New Testament concept of diakonia there are two distinct but related Old Testament concepts - the calling of Israel for the service of God (*'abodath-Yahweh*), and the Old Testament model of the Suffering Servant of the Second Isaiah oracles as the true executor and fulfiller of that diakonia - the *ebed-Yahweh* who suffers on behalf of others and by whose stripes they are healed.

This is the context in which Jesus Christ the true servant . (*ebed*) says constantly: "The Son of Man must suffer and be killed" (Matt. 16:21). Peter's avowal that this should not happen (16:22) draws the

Lord's most severe rebuke that it is no less than a Satanic temptation: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (16:23). If our diakonia today becomes too comfortable, painless, riskless, unopposed, we will need to check whether we have fallen into the great temptation.

It is in the same context that St Paul speaks to the Corinthians about his own credentials as an ambassador of God. Those credentials are threefold:

- a) constant suffering, affliction and humiliation;
- b) total openness to all in unhypocritical love;
- c) the capacity to take acceptance and rejection, approval and disapproval, with the same equanimity and rejoicing.

When I think of the church's diakonia in my own country, I find this rarely to be the case. Our credentials as a Suffering Servant in India are highly defective. Not only the official church, but even the action groups do not produce these credentials. Even Mother Teresa, who is a tremendously successful Christian deacon, ambassador and servant to the poor, can hardly produce the credentials which St. Paul is talking about.

On the other hand there has been at least one suffering servant, with these credentials, whom I have encountered in India, in my own life-time. But Mahatma Gandhi was not a baptized or believing Christian. He came to the people as a suffering servant of God, with all the three credentials. He walked into the village of Noakhali, where Hindus and Muslims were shooting and stabbing each other, in 1947. Clad in a loin-cloth, without sleep and without eating, with just the old man's walking stick in his hand, this frail and fragile servant walked into Muslim homes and Hindu homes, saying to the Muslims: "I am a Hindu; kill me if you want to kill a Hindu, but do not kill others." To the Hindu household, brimming with the same passionate and murderous hatred as the Muslim household, Gandhi walked in and said: "I am a friend of the Muslims; kill me first, but do not kill others."

The fact that he succeeded in Noakhali shows only the power of love. The fact that he was shot down by a Hindu at a joint prayer meeting of people of all religions confirms the truth that love does not always succeed, but that the true vocation of the Suffering Servant is

to love to the point of laying down one's life for others.

Christians, I must say to the shame of my own community in India, should have seen, but did not acknowledge, their Lord as Suffering Servant, in this exceptionally free and dedicated "non-Christian", who held to the truth as his breast-plate and manifested the love of God in laying down his life that others may live.

Draw what lessons you can from this episode of a man of another faith fulfilling the role of the Suffering Servant in our time. I cannot compare a Camillo Torres or an Albert Schweitzer or a Livingstone with Gandhi. They too suffered in serving, but their credentials seem to me to have been incomplete.

The royal priesthood

So, put away all evil and all deceit, all hypocrisy and malice, and all slandering; be like just born babies, desiring only the unadulterated spiritual milk, in order that by it you may grow to the maturity of salvation. You have tasted the Lord, that he is good.

To him approach; he is the living rock, rejected and set aside by human beings, but elect and precious in God's sight; and yourselves as living bricks, be built up (oikodomeisthe) as a spiritual temple (oikos pneumatikos), for the holy priestly ministry of offering up the spiritual sacrifices, pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in holy scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion an elect rock. A cornerstone that is precious indeed. And one who believes and abides in that rock shall never have occasion to be ashamed."

To you who believe the rock is honourable; for the unbeliever, it is a stone thrown away by the builders; this same rock has now become the head cornerstone; a stone that others step on and stumble. They stumble because they do not believe in the word; that is their destiny.

But you are the elect people, the king's priesthood, the holy nation, the people for possession by God, whose job it is to proclaim abroad the heroic acts of the One who called you out of darkness into his wondrous light. Once you were no people, now you are the people of God; once outside the pale of mercy, but now the recipients of God's mercy (1 Pet. 2:1-10).

We come now to meditate on the Royal Priesthood, based on 2 Peter 1-10, and its background in the Old Testament, Exodus 19:5-6:

“Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be a special people for me among all the peoples of the world. They all belong to me; the whole earth is mine. But you, Israel, shall be to me a priest-kingdom (*mamleket-kohanim*) and a holy nation (*goy-qadosh*).”

This vocation of Israel was never fully understood by Israel. Neither do we, the Christians of the world, who have inherited the vocation of Israel, fully comprehend its meaning and scope.

All peoples and nations belong to the Lord, the Israel of Moses and the Egypt of the Pharaohs, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans from whom Abraham came, the hundreds of nations in the United Nations and those outside it like Switzerland. In the time of the calling of Israel, there were probably thousands of nations and peoples. From among these thousands of peoples or *goyim*, Yahweh calls one nation, and that too a slave nation without a king or an address, without even an organized structure of cohesion, to be a special nation, a consecrated people, a *goy-qadosh*, to be a priest-kingdom, a *mamleket-kohanim*, a *basileon hierateuma*, *ethnos hagion*, a holy people totally consecrated to God.

A special nation consecrated for what? - to be a priest-nation on behalf of whom? Israel was chosen from a community of nations to be the priest of that community of nations, i.e. on behalf of all the nations of the earth - to be the light of the nations - to stand on behalf of the nations before God as their priest, and to bring the light of God

to the nations, so that the nations may walk in that light.

Hebrews 5:Iff. defines the function of a priest:

“For every archpriest taken from among human beings is appointed to stand before God on behalf of those human beings, in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for their sins, dealing patiently and gently with the ignorant and the deceived, fully aware that he himself is fallible and weak; for he has the obligation to offer sacrifices for the sins not only of the people, but also for his own sins. He does not take upon himself somehow the honour of a priest, but has to be called by God himself, as for example Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself to become an Archpriest; but rather it was He who said to him: “My Son you are. Today I have given birth to you” (Ps. 2:7), and elsewhere: “You are a priest for ever, belonging to the order of Melchisedek” (Ps. 110:4).

The author of Hebrews goes on to say that Christ became an archpriest by suffering, by loud cries and tears. The Suffering Servant, the *ebed-Yahweh* is also the high priest of Yahweh. Although he was a Son, yet he “learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

The notion of this royal priesthood was not fully assimilated by the early church, perhaps due to the peculiar social conditions in which it operated. Yet some elements it did incorporate in their liturgical symbolism. The eucharist liturgy embodies some of these concepts. It is an offering on behalf of the whole creation, not just on behalf of the church.

Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 split this “a priestly kingdom” into two separate notions - priests *and* a kingdom.

To him who loves us and has released us from our sins by his own blood, and has made us a kingdom, priests to God his Father, to him be glory and power for ages of ages (Rev. 1:5-7).

“And they sing a new song, saying:
worthy art thou to take the book

And to open its seals
 For Thou wast slain
 And by Thy blood
 You have bought for God
 From every tribe and tongue
 From every people and nation
 And made them for our God
 A kingdom and priests
 And they shall rule on the earth” (Rev. 5:10).

But the basic idea is there, much more clearly than in the Pauline Corpus or Johannine writings. The book of Hebrews and first Peter have not lost sight of this classic insight that it is the church that has been ransomed from all peoples and nations - not just individual Christians. And they have been ransomed - this is even more important - not for their personal salvation as individual souls, but to save as a priestly kingdom - a new nation, a corporate entity whose main task is to pray and intercede for nations and peoples, offering up continually the sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving and intercession on their behalf.

Anti-clericalism was an essential thrust of the Protestant Reformation, justified perhaps by the domineering position of the medieval European clergy in economics and politics, in intellectual life and in culture as well. But that uncritical anti-clericalism has distorted Protestant understanding of the scriptures, especially of the Old Testament. The tendency has been to see the prophetic as the normative element in the Old Testament, and by virtue of another distortion, the prophetic understood in terms of preaching (Gospel, *Verkündigung*) as normative for understanding the New Testament.

Anti-clericalism should not blind us to some very simple facts in the Old and the New Testaments:

1. In the original brief description of Israel's commission, i.e. Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments are immediately followed by the command to build altars for sacrifice: “You shall make an altar of earth for me, and you shall sacrifice on it your fire-offerings and your peace-offerings... in every place.”
2. Before the Ten Commandments, and the commandments on

altars and tabernacles, the succinct characterization of the people of God (in this case, Israel) is not in terms of their prophetic or preaching vocation to the world, but their vocation to be a priestly kingdom, a holy nation standing as a priest in the presence of God, interceding on behalf of the whole earth.

3. The revelation given to Moses on Mt Sinai did include more than the Ten Commandments. Yahweh also revealed to him the pattern of the tabernacle that was to be built. In Exodus 24, Moses built an altar below Mt Sinai before going up to receive the two tablets with the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 25 the first thing Yahweh says to Moses is that the people should make an offering, a sacrifice (*Therumah*), to Yahweh of all that is needed to build and decorate the tabernacle of God's presence: "Let them make for me a holy place (*miqdosh*) that I may dwell in their midst (*shakanti betokem*) - a holy place according to the plan I am going to reveal to you" (Ex. 25:8-9).

Protestantism, with its basic prophetic-preaching emphasis, stands to gain a great deal if only its scholars would pay more attention to the centrality of the Tabernacle/Temple and Priest/ Sacrifice, in the Old Testament, as well as in Christ's teaching about his own mission. Here is where Faith and Order in particular, and the World Council as a whole, have a special task cut out for them, if they want to be faithful to Christ's great mission on behalf of the whole of humanity. To preach to the world is one thing, but if that preaching were to have some real power, it must come from a community deeply rooted in the mystery of the tabernacle, the presence of the Christian community not only as the people of God, but also as participating in Christ as High Priest of the world, the community of faith as Christ's body sharing in this earthly reality of a priestly kingdom.

Any kingdom of God studies we will undertake in the near future, in connection with social ethics or Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation will have to see a major aspect at least of this kingdom of God in the notion of the priestly kingdom, offering up eucharistic sacrifices to God on behalf of all nations.

In Christ's own self-understanding the Jerusalem Temple occupies

a central point. The cleansing of the Temple, "my Father's House", is symbolic of the cleansing of a new people to be the Temple of God. It is this same "my Father's House" which, if destroyed, God would rebuild again another, one "not made with hands", in which Christ prepares abiding places for his disciples - the "my Father's House" in which there are many mansions.

The Temple-Cult-Priesthood-Sacrifice aspect, despised by Rationalism and Enlightenment, and therefore by European biblical scholarship, will have to find its place again at the centre of WCC studies, especially Faith and Order, Church and Society, and World Mission, if the WCC is to pass beyond being a bourgeois, Protestant, Enlightenment organization of vintage European culture and have real appeal for not only the Orthodox, but also for the broad masses of Christians in all lands who are not yet completely brainwashed by the European Enlightenment.

A kingdom of priests witnessing to the kingdom of God, a priestly nation standing as priest for the nations - this is a more appropriate self-understanding for the Christian church in the world than the present ideas of proclamation and mission.

Conclusion

The royal priesthood or priestly kingdom is a very rich idea indeed. The whole work of the WCC may be resumed under a single phrase - *oikodome* or upbuilding for the royal priesthood. If the church in the world is not to belong to any particular nation or culture or religion, but is to become a genuinely integrated nation chosen from all nations and located in all nations, then we must overcome the ideas of mission born in Charlemagne's Christendom and the Medici papacy - ideas which came to be effective in Protestantism only with the rise of the North European imperial expansion. The WCC's task, it seems to me, is clear. It is not for itself to become the structure for the unity of world church, nor to create the structure which would unite all churches. Its task is to become a central coordinating body to make sure that the church in each nation is built up and equipped to fulfill its function as the local unit, local manifestation, of the only holy nation and royal priesthood that is the church of Jesus Christ, and to keep

each local church aware of the fact that its being is not defined by the bounds of the nation in which it is located, but by its being an integral part and local manifestation of the fullness of the one holy nation and royal priesthood of all nations and all ages.

It is that great mystery of the church's unity with Christ and his eternal sacrifice on the one hand, and with the Christian churches and persons of all nations and all ages that is time and again enacted in the eucharistic act of the church. Once our constituency and leadership grasp this deeper sense in which the eucharist is not only the enactment of Christian truth, but also the source-spring of all Christian activity in the world, the WCC will have a new lease on its life. For then the royal priesthood and priestly kingdom will begin to become a reality once again in the churches - the priestly task of interceding and sacrificing on behalf of the nation and the kingly task of laying down one's life that others may live - the way Christ the king showed us on the cross.

Christ's Ministry to the World

The understanding of the nature of the Christian church, its ministry and sacraments, can be said to constitute the major area of disagreement between the three main traditions of Christianity in the world today, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. The ecumenical dialogue has revealed large areas of agreement. The Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry study (BEM) sponsored by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches is as yet uncompleted. It has resulted in a striking consensus on a basic study document (the Lima document) to serve as a starting point for the discussion, and has been received with approbation in many churches. There have been reservations in that approbation, but the document has already served to foster a new discussion.

The nature of the church

What is the church? That question is still answered in radically different ways by different schools of Christian thought. It is possible to conceive it as an institution or as a voluntary organization of Christian believers. So conceived, a sociological approach may bring out several phenomenological features of the churches as they exist today. But our question is theological, and therefore the answer may not conform to the sociological phenomenon observed by us. The sociological features would of course provide a challenge to the theological answer given by the various traditions. Explanation will need to be provided where the sociological reality differs from the theological conception. We cannot here attempt that. My purpose is to seek to answer the theological question in a way that could help the formulation of the church's ministry as it ought to be today.

Christ's own teaching

The church was only very briefly mentioned by Christ himself. He left no elaborate instructions as to what its ministry ought to be, or about how it is to be governed. What Christ said, however, as reported by the Gospel according to St Matthew (no other gospel

mentions it directly) is full of meaning, and it seems best to start there. Matthew's use of the word *ekklesia* in 16:18 is the key; his further use of it in 18:17 may be safely set aside as referring to the Jewish *kahal*.

“He (Christ) says to them (the apostles): And you, who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered and said: You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus said to him in reply: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Yona, for flesh and blood did not reveal (this) to you, but my Father who is in the heavenlies. And I say to you that you are *Petros* (rock), and upon this rock I will build (*oikodomeso mou*) the church for myself; and the gates of Hades shall not resist it. I will give you (singular) the keys (plural) of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind (as obligatory) on earth shall be bound in the heavenlies, and whatever you unbind on earth shall be unbound in the heavenlies” (Matt. 16:15-19).

Many exegetical questions arise from these words. We shall not be able to answer all of them here. The most controversial of these questions would be whether this power was given to Peter alone, or to all the apostles together, or to the whole church. Similarly the second controversial question is whether the apostle Peter forms by himself the foundation of the church, or whether the foundation is Christ (see e.g. Rom. 15:20-21; 1 Cor. 3:11; especially Peter's own testimony in 1 Pet. 2:3-10). The Eastern Orthodox Church teaches that it is to the whole church that the power of the keys has been given; the keys are symbols of the authority to unbind and release people from the power of sin and death and also to initiate into the kingdom of God.

We are more concerned here with the task of the church, the purpose for which it was founded by Christ. Its function is already indicated in the words of our Lord: it is to lay siege to Hades, which is the kingdom of sin and death. As the church proceeds to the attack, the gates of Hades, however powerful, shall not prevail against the church's onslaught. The gates will give way, so that the prisoners of sin and death can be released and let out.

If there are two keys of the kingdom, the first one is to open the gates of Hades and the second to open the gates of the kingdom of God. The first one is the power to forgive sins and to give life; the second is to make people initiates of the kingdom, children of God, knowing and committed to God's purposes.

If these are the two purposes of the church, if these are the two things which the incarnate Christ accomplishes, then the church's ministry is to participate in Christ's ministry to the world. The church has no ministry of its own except to participate in Christ's ministry. This point, however, needs to be further reflected upon. Christ's ministry is wider and ranges farther than the ministry of the church. The church participates in that ministry, but has no monopoly of it. Theoretically the two should be identical, since the church is Christ's body. In fact, however, this eschatological identity of Christ and his church remains only partially fulfilled. The Holy Spirit is still guiding the church into all truth, and therefore into full obedience. In the highpriestly prayer of John 17, Christ prays:

“And now no longer am I in the world, (i.e., as incarnate), but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Father most holy, maintain them in that name of Yours which You have granted me, in order that they may be one even as we are” (John 17:11).

In other words, the capacity of the church to participate in Christ's ministry is proportional to the bearing of God's holy name, which means being Godlike as Jesus Christ was. Only as the church approximates Christ's Personality will it become truly one and fully participant in Christ's ministry. The unity of the church is a primary aspect of that personality, and division in the church becomes a denial of Christlikeness. Christ was and is one in his unity with the Father. The church also has to become one in itself, with Christ, in union with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. That is the eschatological nature of the church. Our participation as church in Christ's ministry is conditional on our free fulfilment of that eschatological nature.

Christ's prayer continues:

“Not regarding these alone do I request, but also

regarding those believing in me through their words, so that all may be one, as You, Father, are in me and I in you, so that they also may be (one) in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent me" (John 17: 20-21).

It is only in unity with the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit that the church can fulfill its ministry. It is this unity with the Triune God and in the Triune God that makes possible genuine unity of the church and therefore the fulfilment of the ministry of the church. Disunity is a violation of the true nature of the church, an infringement of the church's eschatological nature, of its conforming to the nature of Christ. The failure of love leads to disunity, for God is love and the church has to reflect that nature. It is love that the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts; without love, there is neither church nor ministry. Failure to love lies at the root of the failure in the church's ministry. Where there is no love, the Spirit of God is not at work; the church may work all day and all night, and yet it may catch nothing (John 21:3). Sociologically it may be growing, in numbers, wealth and institutions; but it is all hay and stubble that the fire will destroy.

Alas, the church's ministry is too often measured in terms of activism and institutionalism. Actions, words and institutions are legitimate instruments of the church's ministry. But they should spring from love, for God is love. This is where the sociological method may be inadequate for measuring the successes and failures of the church's ministry. God's love was what Christ manifested in his incarnate ministry. The church's ministry is to continue that manifestation.

According to the Johannine account the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles by the Resurrected Christ for the church's ministry:

"So, the disciples, seeing the Lord, were filled with joy. So, Jesus says to them again: Peace to you. As the Father has delegated me, so send I you. And saying this, he breathed on them, and says to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you remit anyone's sins, remitted they shall be for them; and if anyone's sins you enforce,

enforced they shall be" (John 20:20-23).

The Church's apostolic ministry is thus a continuation of Christ's ministry, to be fulfilled in union with him by the Holy Spirit. Its Christological and pneumatological aspects define its content, and to these we turn now.

Christ's ministry and ours

In the interest of brevity we will not go into the details of Christ's threefold ministry, as the High Priest who is the eternal archetype of all priesthood, as the prophet who brings the fullness of God's word to us, and as the Shepherd-king who sits eternally on the throne of David. We will only seek to sketch the outline of the three aspects, the priestly, the prophetic and the shepherdly. We should warn, however, that under-playing any of the three aspects would lead to a distorted understanding of Christ's ministry as well as ours. The temptation can be very strong indeed.

The priestly ministry

The fundamental nature of Christ's priestly ministry is dealt with in detail in the Epistle to the Hebrews; it may be distasteful to the modern rational mind, but should not on that account be despised or ignored. Even in our interpretation of the Old Testament we succumb too often to this temptation when we see the prophetic as central and the cultic or priestly as peripheral. On Mount Sinai, Moses was given more than the two tablets of the Law. He was shown also the design for the tabernacle (Ex. 35:4ff.) The whole book of Leviticus is full of rich symbolism about the cultic observances enjoined by Yahweh. It is the most tragic thing about modern rationality that it has lost all sensitivity to ritual and worship, wherein truths much deeper than the discursive are signified.

Jesus Christ did not bequeath to us any writings of his own; but he gave us the eucharist, wherein the heart of the Christian ministry is communicated to us. The eucharistic act is the central and most fundamental aspect of the ministry of the church, and the neglect of it for the sake of greater emphasis on preaching and witnessing has been a tragic distortion in the life of the church.

Jesus Christ gave himself in sacrifice to the Father, once for all, on the cross of Calvary. He rose again, victor over sin and death. That sacrifice and that victory are what we celebrate in the eucharist. But we do not do so in any individualistic way. We do it as the community of the Spirit, as Christ's body. In that act we are united with Christ and are conformed to Christ. United with him, we offer ourselves to God as a community, in trusting sacrifice. In the eucharist, Christ gives us his own body and blood so that we may be sustained by it and grow to be Christlike. God entrusts God's self to us so that we may truly become a God-bearing community. It is this union with God that constitutes the foundation of the Christian ministry and is itself the most important part of our ministry, since without it our ministry cannot be Christian ministry.

A priest is always one who stands before God on behalf of others, interceding for them, offering their sacrifices. Jesus Christ is the one and only High Priest, the archetype of all priesthood. He did not offer the sacrifice of himself for his own sake, but for the sake of the world, to reconcile the world to God. In our eucharistic ministry or Christian priestly ministry, we can only participate in Christ's ministry, by offering ourselves to God on behalf of the whole creation and on behalf of the whole of humanity. It is this aspect of the eucharist that often gets neglected, even in those traditions like the Catholic and the Orthodox where the eucharist is still acknowledged as central. The whole church, participating in Christ's priesthood, offers itself on behalf of the whole world, not just on behalf of itself.

This priestly ministry does not belong to the ordained clergy alone. At baptism all Christians were initiated into the Christic high-priesthood. All baptized Christians, clergy and laity, men and women, and also children, participate fully and without reservation in Christ's priesthood, as members of his body, the church. The eucharistic act is an act of the whole church, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. And by the whole church we should understand not only all baptized Christians living on earth now, but also the departed faithful, who by baptism were united with Christ and do not fall off from that union at death. Each local church has to be aware of this larger dimension of the church in its priestly ministry. In offering ourselves again and again in

the eucharist, we keep in mind not only the whole church in space, but also the whole church in time. To be united with Christ means also to be united with the whole body of Christ in space and time. Even in the older traditions which symbolically express this larger dimension by commemorating the departed, this awareness has to be strengthened by good teaching, because our tendency is to be aware only of the local congregation in worship.

Any programme for the renewal of the church's ministry in our time should stress not only this catholic dimension of it, but also its vicarious or intercessory dimension. The church does not worship in order to gain something for itself. It is like Christ's self-offering, a sacrifice on behalf of others. Others include not only the whole of humanity, but also the whole created order, both organic and inorganic. As we take the fruit of the vine and the bread of powdered grain, both mixed with water, and lift it up to God, we are offering the whole creation which sustains us and supports us in life.

The ministry of prayer and intercession is part of the church's priestly ministry in Christ, who continues to this day in interceding for us with the Father (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34). The Holy Spirit is also continuously interceding, through groans expressing our unspoken aspirations (Rom. 8:26, 27). Intercession for non-believers, for the coming of more justice into societies, for peace in the world, and for the biosphere that sustains our life, for summer and winter in due time, for science and technology becoming true instruments of humanity's emancipation and not of exploitation and oppression, for our political, economic, social and cultural institutions, for the weak and the poor, for the oppressed and the under-privileged, for the sick and the handicapped, for the lepers and victims of AIDS - all these are integral parts of our priestly ministry. And intercession has to spring from love, from understanding and compassion, from genuine sympathy and identification. The church thus has to become a source-spring of blessing and love for all, not of judgment and condemnation, not of hatred and cursing. The recovery of this ministry of prayer and intercession will be a major element in the renewal of the church's ministry.

The prophetic ministry

The churches of the Reformation have been stronger in emphasizing this prophetic ministry. But a fuller understanding of its nature can help all of us in all the traditions to seek a more comprehensive renewal of this ministry. There are two aspects of the church's prophetic ministry which have to be held in balance with each other - one addressed to the church and the other to humanity or the state or other institutions in society.

The New Testament speaks of the church as being founded on the "apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20) and the apostle Paul lists among the gifts of the Spirit given to the church first apostles, then prophets (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 3:5, 4:11, etc.). These references are certainly not to Old Testament prophets, but to an office in the early church which seems to have become subsequently defunct. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 there is an extended discussion on the comparative merits of speaking in tongues and prophesying both of which are among the gifts of the Spirit.

The New Testament prophet speaks to the church for its edification (1 Cor. 14:3-5). The purpose of New Testament prophecy is to build up the body of Christ through words of teaching inspired directly by the Holy Spirit. The prophet in the New Testament church does not speak to the state or to the outside world in order to criticize their activities. There was indeed much to criticize in the way the Roman imperial administration functioned, but the New Testament prophet was concerned about building up the life of the church. This ministry of *oikodome* of the church needs to get special attention if the ministry of the church is to be renewed today. We need to face the cynical comment of non-Christians that Christians will do better if they cut down on the propaganda of mission and spent more energy on the product of the gospel, namely the quality of Christian life. We must refrain from an extended discussion of this concept of *oikodome* of the church, which is primary and basic, both for worship or priestly ministry and for the mission or shepherdly ministry to the world.

A short formula for the renewal of the Christian ministry would be: "oikodome for the royal priesthood." Oikodome literally means

house-building. Even this task of building up the body of Christ is a common task of all Christians, not just of the clergy. The ordained clergy have of course a special responsibility in this regard, but no monopoly of it. In fact they can accomplish their task only with the full cooperation of all believers. The point to note here is that building up the body of Christ is not an end in itself, but oriented to the royal priesthood, to which all Christians are called. It is to all Christians that the apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9:

“But you (plural) are an elect race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, in order that you may declare the mighty acts of him who called you out from (the domain of) darkness into his marvellous light.”

This kingly priesthood refers back to the calling of the Old Israel in Exodus 19:5-6:

“And if surely you will listen to my voice and will keep my covenant, you will become for me a cherished people above all the nations of the earth, for the whole earth is mine; and you shall become for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

It is clear from the context in the Old Testament that the Old Israel was not called for its own sake, but to serve as a priestly nation in the community of nations, a nation that constantly stands before God offering the sacrifice of the nations and interceding for them. Israel forgot this vicarious nature of its calling most of the time. The Christian church falls prey to the same temptation much too often. It is the community of nations for which the church is the priest, in union with Christ. Forget that, and the Christian ministry is already betrayed. In the Old Testament the Hebrew expression *mamleket kohanim* meant simply a kingdom or nation among nations or kingdoms, a kingdom especially chosen to be the priest for the community of nations. In the New Testament the Greek expression *basilikon hierateuma* takes on a new significance. The Book of Revelation says that our Redeemer “has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (1:6) or more explicitly, in 5:9-10:

“Worthy art Thou to receive the Book and to open its seals for Thou wast slain, and by Thy blood has purchased for God out of every tribe and people and nation, and made them for our God a Kingdom and priests, and they shall reign upon the earth.”

The same idea is repeated in Rev. 20:6 where also priesthood and reigning kingship are associated. It is to this kingly or royal ministry that we shall now turn.

The ministry of the king-shepherd

What could a kingly ministry for the church mean in our time? It is fascinating to observe how the institution of kingship is fast passing out of history. It is particularly noteworthy for us in India. Till 1947 we had 526 maharajahs and rajahs. And almost overnight, there was not even one. And the same goes for the people of Israel. For centuries they had no king. Then in the days of Samuel, the people insisted on having a king like the other nations. Yahweh told them that they needed no king, since Yahweh himself was the King of Israel. The people kept on insisting (1 Sam. 8:1-20), and with dire warnings Yahweh gave them their first king, Saul. The kingship in Israel ended with the Babylonian captivity, but the people were promised a new kind of king, the messianic Son of David, the good king. When Pilate asked Jesus whether he was a king, the reply was ambiguous. Christ himself preferred the title Shepherd or Pastor. Moses was a shepherd, David was a shepherd. Christ himself does not say, in John 10, that he is the good king. Instead he says: I am the Good Shepherd, the Bon Pastor.

Jesus did not deny the title “King of the Jews.” But where is that title inscribed? On the top of the cross of Calvary. It is from the cross that Jesus rules, with power over sin and death, but also over all creation.

In John 10, Jesus himself gives the definition of the good king or the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. This is the church's ruling power over the world, the power to lay down our lives for the sake of humanity and the world. This is our true jurisdiction, our true magisterium, as those united with the crucified One.

We shall here briefly enumerate the three qualities of the Good Shepherd as Jesus outlines them in John 10. These are specifications of Christ's ministry to the world and therefore of ours in union with him.

First, the Good Shepherd knows his sheep intimately by name. The sheep trust him, and when he calls they respond, for they recognize his voice (John 10:3). This is the relationship that the church also should have towards the whole world, a relationship of intimate mutual knowledge and a complete trust in the church. Alas, we have made such a mess of that relationship by our dominance and self-regarding that the world no longer trusts us, nor responds to our voice. The recovery of this trust will come only when the church becomes prepared to lay down its concern about itself and genuinely and sincerely cares for the world. Central to the renewal of the ministry of the church is the winning back of this relationship of trust, which will not happen through any amount of preaching and professing a love which does not really exist. When the church hates any group of people, be they people of other religions or other ideologies, the church loses its credentials as Good Shepherd.

Neither anti-Americanism nor anti-communism goes with the character of the church.

The second quality of the Good Shepherd is that at his behest, the doors of the sheepfold are opened and the sheep are able to go out and find pasture. The shepherd does not bring the sheep's food into the sheepfold, but leads them out and goes before them to where the green pastures and the still waters are. This is the church's most important ministry - to open doors that confine people in oppression, injustice and exploitation, to lead the nations to where they can find the just societies of green pastures and the still waters of peaceful and secure national and international situations. The church does not hand out justice and peace to the nations. It is from a relationship of trust that the church should be able to lead the nations away from their confinement in injustice, war, oppression, exploitation, terrorism, and environmental decay.

The third aspect of the ministry of the Good Shepherd is perhaps

the most characteristic of Christ, and possibly the most uncharacteristic of the Christian church. As the sheep move towards freedom and justice, the wolves come. And like hire-lings, when we see the wolf coming we leave the sheep and flee (John 10:12). The Good Shepherd, on the other hand, struggles with the wolves and if necessary lays down his life for the sheep. Oppose openly and effectively the oppressive structures of the world, and the wolves will advance on us to tear us apart and snatch the sheep away. I will not try to identify or even exemplify the wolves today. But they are there for all to see, aggressive, sly and cruel, ravenous with greed. If the church takes up a fight with the wolves it will lose much of its privilege and power, financial and otherwise. So we keep silent, hypocritically leaving it to God to bring justice and peace in the world.

Conclusion

We have dealt with, in bare and inadequate outline, the threefold ministry of Christ and therefore of the church, as high priest of the world, as prophet of the world and as shepherd of the world. *Oikodome*, or building up of the body of Christ, is in order that the church may be able to fulfill this threefold ministry to the world. The ordained ministry has to be understood both as the agency commissioned by God to help the church fulfill this ministry and as a visible, sacramental, conciliar presence of Christ the High Priest, Prophet and Shepherd in the community of the Spirit.

Both the ministry of the whole church and the special ministry of the specially ordained, have to be understood both charismatically and pneumatologically, as well as in concrete historical and existential terms.

Leiturgia as Service of God & Service to men

INTRODUCTION

The times in which we live tend to impose on our Christian thinking two kinds of distortions, closely related to each other, concerning the nature of the World.

On the one hand we have, in our justified reaction to an otherworldly pietism, tended to over - affirm this world and its reality. The Lordship of Christ, over the Church and the World has become a slogan in ecumenical thinking. All the New Testament writers, however, are emphatic on the point that “the World passes away” (1 John 2:17, 2 Peter 3:11-12, 1 Thess. 5:3 etc). To us today, in spite of Evanston’s valiant attempt to tackle the eschatological problem, the transience of the world remains in our Christian consciousness only as a vague fear of the loss of being or as an obscure hope for something better. We need today a balanced view of the world which keeps its historical meaning and its ultimate non-being in fruitful tension with each other.

On the other hand, in our great eagerness to affirm the Christian validity of the Saeculum, we are led into the error of thinking that the Saeculum can have its own inner logic. The Lordship of Christ over the Saeculum is not of the character of an arbitrary authority. The nature of this Lordship has to be made clear - We need to interpret the relationship of Secular history to the ultimate purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Too easy a resolution of this issue can be misleading and therefore dangerous. But to avoid, the issue and to say simply that God is working in the Saecular process can hardly be helpful. We are forced, if we think deeply enough, to look for clues from the Christian faith which can help us see where the hand of God is beckoning, and to warn us of false but popular tracks of Christian advance in the world.

Closely connected with these two tendencies to distortion is a current attitude towards any theological basis for our work in the world. A prominent economist who is also a Christian leader, for example, argues for a dualistic approach, since he finds no easy step from the Christian insights about the nature of Society to the realities of the social situation. So we are asked, in effect, to keep our theology in one compartment of our head, and to act in the social reality of the world on the basis of generally accepted sociological principles. This is all right as an immediate pragmatic approach to the world, but we have no right to shirk our responsibility to relate our dogma and our prayers to each other.

Pragmatism has yielded admirable results. The Church cannot of course, afford to keep on theologizing without acting. But are we yielding to a rather subtle temptation in refusing to think over the ultimate meaning of human history and our actions within it? Ever since Immanuel Kant's perilous attempt to redeem philosophy from the dominance of metaphysics, by shifting the transcendent from the realm of the intellectual to the practical, we are reluctant to enter the domain of the ultimate issues even in theology. Secular / philosophy itself following the lead given long ago by Hume, is too willing today to abandon the search for the meaning of life as a whole and to be satisfied with either the meaning of words and sentences, or to limit itself to the "for - me."

There is the second temptation, namely to make work the substitute for thought and prayer. One can find a "pro - me" meaning for life in significant active service, and the burden of meaninglessness can be temporarily lightened by being given something useful to do. I have a recent letter from a church administrator in one of the most prosperous countries of the world about the large number of Christian people at present employed in Government or private business, who approach him with requests to be sent to Africa or Asia where they can be "useful." And we here in the WCC have begun to measure the "life" of a Church by the false standard of the extent of its practical activity. Prayer is necessary we say, especially intercession, but quite often we are thinking of disseminating information and creating interest when we request various people to pray for a par-

ticular project. To use prayer for promotion is to prostitute the gospel.

As a result of these distortions and our succumbing to these temptations the goals of our ministry in the world have in recent years come perilously close to being indistinguishable from the goals of secular humanism.

It is true to say that for far too many Christians Service is fast becoming a substitute for faith and worship? When our young people show impatience for theological difficulties and ecclesiastical problems and call for decisive and courageous action, are they betraying their lack of grounding in faith and worship? Or are we of the older generations too much bound to the traditional and the theological?

Worship, true Christian worship in spirit and in truth, calls for a genuine encounter with the Transcendent God. Is it because we know so little about the transcendent and are painfully unsure of what little we have been taught in Sunday School, that we choose to leave alone the realm of the transcendent and to seek involvement in the empirical world as an escape from that encounter?

The purpose of our Biblical enquiry is to attempt to raise some of these questions, to suggest some ways of looking at the whole problem and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in finding a common mind on these issues as they come up in our consultations and private conversations here.

God and The World

The Eternal and the Historical

1 Jn. 1:15-17, Romans 8:18-28

“If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.”

Here is the characteristic Johannive antithesis between God and the world. It is an either / or. And one could multiply the number of Scripture verses which support this antithetical point of view. And I sincerely believe that only by a considerable twisting of the Scripture passages can you find a directly positive attitude towards the world in most of the New Testament Scriptures.

There are of course passages, which on the face of them, contradict the injunction: “Love not the world.” For example in the same Johannive writings we read: “God so loved the world” (Jn. 3:16), but even this does not constitute a positive attitude towards the world, no more than the fact that Christ loved sinners and died for them constitutes an approval of sinners.

The tension is inescapable in the Johannive writings. The two main categories of his thinking are in John 8:23: “You are from below, I am from above: you are of this world, I am not of this world.” Jesus is APO THECU (John 13:3), not EK TOU KOSHOU (John 8:23). So are the disciples (John 17:14, 16).

But do we not read in the very first page of the Bible that God created the heaven and earth “and saw that it was good?” (Genesis 1). What then is the meaning of the tension which appears in the New Testament between God and the world?

The Pauline interpretation is that “through one man sin entered into the world” (Romans 5:12). John concurs in saying “The whole world lies in evil” (1 Jn. 5:19) and the enemy of God, the *Diaholos* has become the “ARCHON TCU KOSMOU”, the Prince of this world (Jn. 12-25).

And because the nature of the world is contingent upon God's will, it forfeits its life when it opposes God. For after all, it is only “when the Lord reigns” that “the world stands firm, never to be moved” (1 Chron. 16:30) or as the Psalmist puts it “The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty. Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved” (Ps. 93:1; 96:10). This relationship between the Lord's reign (the Kingdom of God) and the positive affirmation of the world is important for us. It is the world as opposed to God, having Gods of its own choice, that the New Testament describes negatively. To the extent to which the Kingdom of God becomes established in it, it becomes itself significantly established. But the Kingdom of God is a very misleading term. For we tend to think of a Kingdom mainly in terms of a geographical area, or of a number of people who are citizens of it. Or again we tend to think of the kingdom as a society in the world where righteousness reigns, where social justice has been established. When we conceived of the kingdom of God in terms of an earthly society with justice, peace, and prosperity as its main qualities, we have already fallen into that major heresy within Christian history, Marxism. The Marxist goal, as well as the goal of modern western secularism are essentially the same in this respect, except that Western society puts more emphasis on individual freedom while the Marxist conceives of freedom as a social or collective possession.

If the Christian goal is in some sense different, in what exactly does the difference consist? Herbert Butterfield in that admirable little book “Christianity and History” describes the difficulty about the Marxist or secular goal for society. If this “class-less” or, “injus-

tice-less" society is to emerge in history at a particular point of time, then, what happens, to the generations that preceded it? Are they to be conceived merely as the steps of a ladder on 'which one particular generation climbs to its heaven?

Here the Christian conception of the purpose of God for the world comes as an answer. The world is both contingent and transient. History is a time-process. If it appears meaningless to contemporary man, it is only because he does not see it in the light of God's purpose for it. It does not have its meaning within itself. And its meaning is inseparable from its rootage in the eternal. This is the main point of the Romans passage for our study today.

History is waiting for its fulfillment. But it has to await the full manifestation of those who have been born EK TOU THEOU, the Sons of God (Rom. 8:19). The meaninglessness of history (futility, emptiness, V. 19) shall be transformed into meaningfulness when Jesus Christ becomes manifested with his bride the Church, in the full splendour of His glory. We the Sons of God, hoping in glory, but living in suffering, live within this meaningless world in that the full assurance that this apparent meaninglessness is part of the transitory world. When the Kingdom of God becomes openly manifested the perspective will change, and the meaningless will suddenly become meaningful. The Creation is at present subject to disintegration and death, that is what makes time an apparent tragedy. But then time itself is to be no more, and the Creation itself is to be transmitted into something of which the basic perspective is not time with its inexorable orientation towards disintegration and death.

This world then is not the *theatre* on which this fulfillment is to take place. It is only *the field* in which the new world is being cultivated. The eschatological fulfilment is neither a point in the timeprocess, nor utterly discontinuous with it. Time and eternity are related to each other not in any chronological order. Their relationship is that of the field and the crop though, this is a rather lame analogy.

When our Lord, in the interpretation of the parable of the sower, speaks about the world as the field (Mt: 13:38) he is not speaking of

preaching the gospel to the ends of the earths as the Sowing of the Seed. The seed is not the Gospel, but man, the "Sons of the Kingdom" (Mat.13:38). The Church is the Seed, which, planted in the world of men, assimilates the substance of the world into itself, and hears fruit in peace, joy and righteousness. And the Sons of the Kingdom are there, where these fruits are seen.

The Sons of the Kingdom, the good seed with its fruit, is then what History contributes, if one may speak thus, to the New world, which is already there in the realm of the eternal now.

The meaning of the historical world with all its suffering and pathos, lies then, not in any future human society in which we will have one world with one Church in it. We cannot think of the movement towards one world as witnessed in the United Nations and towards the *Una Sancta* as seen in the Ecumenical Movement, as the basic pattern of the meaning of the historical process. To do so is to fall into Marxist - Secularist error again.

But neither is the goal of the historical process to be seen as that of providing the opportunity for plucking a few individuals out of a condemned world, salvation being seen as a simply salvaging operation. That would be to fall into two errors at the same time - the individualist error and the error of conceiving eternity as a chronological appendix to time.

Let me summarize them:

1. A simple positive affirmation of the world as good, or a simple injunction for the Church to become "involved" in the world, is nowhere seen in the New Testament.

2. The world does not have any meaning in itself. History has meaning only in terms of its relation to the New World, the eternal world, which exists already.

3. The secular history of man, as well as the history of the Christian Church which inescapably participates in it, should not be misread too simply as leading to one world and one Church.

4. The meaning of human history lies in that it produces the raw

material, so to speak, of the New World. The Creation of human personality and community is the most significant process going on within history. The Seed that the Sower went forth to Sow is Men.

Romans 8:18-28 and 35-38 (*Paraphrase*)

I feel that the sufferings of our present time are in no way comparable to the glorious excellence that is to be manifested in our lives in the coming age. For the whole created order is, so to speak, watching with outstretched neck, awaiting the time of the open manifestation of the true being of the Sons of God.

The created order is now subject to futility and meaninglessness, not because it chose to be so, but because *He* has chosen to place it under the tension of apparent emptiness and trustful hope. For the created order herself is to be liberated from her present subjection to disintegration and decay, and share in the freedom and the glorious excellence of the Sons of God, as she is now sharing in the groaning and travail of humanity. Why, not only the creation, but we Christians ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Holy Spirit, are now groaning within ourselves, eagerly awaiting the experience of full sonship, the redemption of our physical bodies.

It was this hope that called us to Salvation. Hope already realized is no longer hope. For how can you go on hoping for something which has already been realized before your eyes? But if we are hoping for something which has yet to be seen by us, we must wait patiently for it.

Just as we share in the groaning of the Created order, the Holy Spirit shares in our infirmity and supports us. For example, we have really no idea how or for what things we ought to pray, but He, the Spirit, goes on praying in and through us by speechless groans. And He Who is the discernor of hearts knows what the Spirit's desire is, since the Spirit always prays in and for us in accordance with the purpose of God. For we know that amongst those who love God, those who are called for the fulfillment of this purpose, He works everything together for Good.

Who then shall alienate us from the love of Christ? Shall afflic-

tion or agony, or persecution or famine, or nakedness or catastrophe or the Sword come between us and Christ? As the Scripture says, "For thy sake we are killed every day, reckoned as sheep for the slaughterhouse." But in all these things we win an overwhelming victory through Him who bestowed His love upon us. I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor the rulers of the unseen realm, neither our present situation nor what may befall us in future, neither the magical powers of darkness nor the astrological forces of height or depth, yea, nothing at all in the whole created order, has the power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, the Lord of us all.

God Became Flesh

The Eternal in the Historical

John 1:1-18

If there is one thing that distinguishes the Christian faith from other religions, it is this bold three-word sentence: “God became Flesh.” *Ho Logos sarx egeneto* (Jn. 1:14). This is the major stumbling - block in our faith to Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Secularists alike.

But what difference does it make? Did our Lord become incarnate, only so that a new gimmick for salvation becomes available to man? As some of our Christian friends say - “Believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, and you will be a saved man from that point.” If this is what the Incarnation means, namely that God became Man in order that He may become a substitute for men and bear their punishment once for all, then in the first place the New Testament is more comprehensive than that.

Secondly the New Testament speaks of a judgment which begins at the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). If the punishment has already been borne by Him on the cross, why should we be punished again?

There are others who say that what the Incarnation makes possible is a new self-understanding. This is true so far as it goes, but the Christian understanding of himself must include a conception of how much farther than that we have to go.

Those of us who stand between the conservative - Evangelical

and the Bultmannian - post - Bultmannian positions speech of the Incarnation as the "decisive act of God in History" so that Christ becomes the centre and the Lord of History. All that is wonderful, but the impression it gives to most non-Christians is that of a tribal war - God. "Our God is the Lord of all Gods, so you better surrender to our God, and forsake your false Gods" we say to the people of the world. Sensitive Asians and Africans detect in this a spiritual kind of Colonialism, in which the tribal God of the West is asserting himself, assisted of course by the technological and scientific superiority of the West, over the Gods of Asia and Africa. And their initial and continuing response is to resist such surrender and to consider anyone who surrenders as a betrayer of the Asian or African heritage.

"Jesus Christ is Lord" was a meaningful and quickening slogan in Nero's Rome and Hitler's Germany, but it is hardly so meaningful in Nehru's India or Nyerere's Tanganyika, since we are not asked to say that Nehru is Lord or that Julius is Lord. We are in full sympathy with The tremendous significance of that theology which arose in the *Bekennntnis - kirche* and affirmed passionately that Jesus Christ is Lord of both the Church and the World. In the context also of a theology of a Church - and - State dualism this affirmation is meaningful and perhaps necessary. But in most of the world this message that "Jesus Christ is Lord" does not speak to the needs of ordinary men, nor does it sound particularly relevant to many ordinary Christians in Asia and Africa. "The Lordship of Christ over the Church and the World" is not an adequate framework in which the Gospel can be meaningfully presented to either Christians or non-Christians in Asia and Africa today.

We need a fresh understanding of the Gospel, and this understanding, if you will forgive my boldness, can hardly be provided by European or Western theology which is at present moulded by the recent history of the Protestant West.

On the other hand, traditional Eastern Christianity which at one time was very meaningful to people has been unable to comprehend its own tradition adequately to have the self-confidence even to attempt a new and dynamic re-interpretation of the traditional faith.

The Logos, who was God and was face to face with God, is the one in whom the creation subsists. He, the Logos, is also the Creator of life, and the one who made Man to emerge in the stream of life. But He also gave light to men, the ability to see, to create.

This light is today in darkness. The darkness, which has no ultimate being, has even become aggressive against the Light, especially when the True Light (v. 9) which is the source of all human light, became incarnate in the midst of the darkness. The darkness has expressly rejected the Light, but some amidst the darkness have been rekindled; these are the *Tekna Theow*, the children of God, they who received the Light, and believed in His name. They have now been given *exousia*, authority, to become the sons of God. They are newborn, *EK THEOW*, from God.

The coming of the Light then has a two-fold purpose; at least in the passage we are studying;-

first: that by *believing in His name*, some may receive *authority* to become *Children of God*.

second: that God's true *glory*, which is *grace* and *truth*, (v. 14, 17) has now been manifested to *us* (v. 14) through this unique *Son* (v. 14, 18).

The underlined words are worth careful study. We do not have the time here to do it. But a few things need to be pointed out.

Believing in His name is a phrase which can be easily misconstrued because of the differences of nuance of the words "believe" and "name" in the Hebraic tradition out of which our Lord and the disciples spoke, and the modern functional languages in which we communicate today.

Most New Testament scholars make the distinction between "believing in" and "believing that." The first is usually interpreted as "surrender to and utter dependence on" Christ, while the second is "acceptance of the Christian message" (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. II. Eng. Tr. p. 70). The one would appear to be centrally located in the will, while the second has the "mind" as its location, though both involve the whole person. But faith involves

infinitely more than this. The Hebrew verb “aman” (from which comes the word “Amen”) means fundamentally a quality of “unanxious abiding.” Freedom from fear, anxiety and restlessness can come only when life is no longer subject to fear of exposal or extinction. The world, as we have seen, lies oriented towards disintegration and death. Nothing in the world abides. Time leads all things to non-being. And so long as the foundations of our being are in the world, “we cannot escape being subject to the fear of non-being. So also, so long as our life is in darkness, we cannot escape from the fear of light, of exposal.

This is why Truth and Grace are the two things which come in Jesus Christ (v. 17). Truth is abiding reality. The world is not truth. Jesus Christ is Truth. To be plucked out of the world (Jn. 17:14), is to be crucified to the world with Christ, a deeply painful experience which can be described only as death, for it involves the complete loss of the being that we have in the world, however false and unabiding that life may be. To believe in His name, is to abide in His person; name in Hebrew denotes person. Thus then to believe in Jesus Christ is ontological change experienced by a human being - namely that his foundation in the world is destroyed and he is given a new basis for his life - the name or person of Jesus Christ the Incarnate Logos.

But Grace is also necessary for man in order that he may be willing to give up the darkness and come into the light. The experience of Grace is also a painful one - for in coming out of darkness to life, our fear of exposal comes to a climax. We are actually exposed, as we are, without the covering of the darkness of our commonly accepted norms of life. But we can have the boldness to come out into the light, only because that Light, through exposing, is also an accepting, forgiving grace.

To believe in His name thus is to live in His Grace and truth, having experienced the painful denudation of our false being and the actual mortification of that false being. To believe in Christ is more than acceptance of the Christian message or surrender to Him. Both are necessary; but to believe is also a continuing experience, of daily

death to oneself, daily experience to the revealing Light, daily re-establishment in the Person of Christ, daily experience of the Father's accepting and forgiving Grace.

Those who live in this daily experience of death and Resurrection receive *authority* (exousia) to become children of God.

To be a child of God involves more than being an object of His love. What it means is seen clearly in the One who is acknowledged by the Father Himself in the words "This is my beloved Son." The Son follows the Father: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (Jn. 5:17). The Father shows the Son all that He himself is doing (Jn. 5:20). "Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise (Jn. 5:19).

To be the Son of God is then to share in the work of the Father. He, Christ, is the true, the unique, the monogenes Son. We, by being incorporated into His person, also receive *authority* to fulfil the filial functions. The Son's words and works were with authority, such that men marvelled. Our words and works in this world must also have this authority. Our labour of service in the world must constantly be checked to see if it has this quality of "authority."

In our non-authoritarian democratic world, authority has often a figurative sense. But the authority of the Son of God was not based on compulsive military or economic might, as He himself told Pilate (If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. Jn. 18:36). It was a self-authenticating authority of Grace and truth. This is the quality which we must bring to our work of service in the world - free, forgiving acceptance of all peoples, coupled with complete openness, without hidden motives or fears, or desire to manipulate. This was God's *glory* which the Son manifested, and which we have received authority to manifest.

To sum up "then, the purpose of the Incarnation, of God becoming flesh is this:-

1, That, within a perishing, dying world, there might be a locus for men to stand, an abiding ground for being, i.e., that men may be drawn from the falsehood of this world to the Truth of God and abide in it.

2, That men may, by experiencing the forgiving and accepting Grace of God, have the courage to come out into the Light, and thereby face themselves and each other in *truth* (aletheia - unconcealedness).

3, That by being grounded in truth, that is in the Body of Christ the Incarnate, crucified and Risen Lord, and by living in the light of unconcealed and open, loving acceptance of God's Grace, we may receive the *authority* to become Sons of God.

4, That as Sons of God with authority we may face the world around us with love and openness and thus remove the darkness of the world by bringing God's truth and Grace into it.

5, The permanent presence of the Eternal in the Historical through the Incarnate Body of Christ sanctifies the whole creation, and makes earthly life significant for eternity.

Jn. 1:1-18 (Paraphrase)

At the fountainhead of all existence was the Logos; the Logos existed eternally vis-a-vis God, and the Logos was God.

This Logos was the one who was from the beginning with God. All things came into existence through him. And nothing at all that exists came into being apart from him. In him was life - this life is the light of man (without him men are in darkness). The light is now shining amidst the darkness of our existence, and the darkness has not been able to comprehend or extinguish the light.

Now there came into existence a human being, commissioned from God, whose name was John. He came for a prophetic, witness, to direct all men to the light, so that all could find a place of trustful abiding in Him. Of course John was not the light; his function was merely to give his testimony concerning the light.

The real and true light, which illuminates all human being and dispels their darkness, was coming into the world. He came. He was in the world. But this world which came into existence through him, would not recognize Him. He came to his own special people, but even they wouldn't accept him. A few, however, did acknowledge

him. To whomsoever that received him that is to those trustfully abiding in His person, He gave authority to become the children of God. They were now born afresh, not from the mixture of human seed, nor from fleshly or human desire, but born from the very being of God.

And the Logos became human flesh. He pitched, his tent amongst us. And we saw His glorious excellence, such excellence as belongs to the only Son of God alone - an excellence full of grace and truth.

It was concerning Him that John gave his testimony, shouting: "This is the One of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has come to be in advance of me, for He existed before I did. And he is our *Protos*, our head.'" For it is out of His abundance that we have all things, and now receive grace, and more grace.

The Torah, the Code of Conduct, was given through Moses; but grace and truth have come into being through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever really encountered God in His full glory. But His only Son, who is always in the most intimate presence of the Father, has made Him known to us.

iii

The Pleroma of Him That Fills all in all The Body of Christ: Eternal and Historical

Eph. 1:3-2:10

The discussion on the nature of the Church is bound to be controversial in our setting. But there is no short-cut from our thinking about the Incarnation to the World of today, except through the Church. The Church is the continuing embodiment of the Incarnation in history, and therefore an understand of the nature and function of the Church is determinative of our attitudes towards World Service, Inter - Church Aid, and Unity.

The nature of the Church is dependent upon its calling: This calling is a three-fold one: To be Sons in agape (V. 4-5), to be holy and blameless before Him (V. 4) and for the praise of his glorious grace (V. 6, 12, 14).

1. The Beloved is the Only-begotten Son (V 6) but we are called to share this Sonship with the Unique Son, the Incarnate Son of God who is also Son of *Man* now. This is our being, our new nature, our new antology, this sharing in the Sonship of God which the Eternal Logos has from eternity and which He has now fulfilled as Son of Man in the Incarnation, and in which we share.

2. Our destiny is to be Saints and Sinless ones and to be face to face with the Father (*einai hemas hagious kai amomous Katenopion autou*). This eschatological destiny of ours is not merely some-

thing in the future. It is experienced as a present reality in our gathering together at the eternal altar of Calvary to be sanctified and cleansed and to offer oneself in Sacrifice to God the Father in the Eucharist.

3. Our present function as well as our future existence is to be seen as the praise of His glorious grace, or the visible manifestation of the tremendous and adorable love of God in the life of the Christian community in the world as it embodies and continues the life of Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant who lays down His life through the members of His body, for the life of the world.

Here, then, are the three constitutive elements of the Church:

a) Our calling in the Gospel and in Baptism to share in Sonship.

b) Our Eucharistic offering of ourselves to God the Father, through the eternal offering of the Unique Son on Calvary, and our life face to face with the Father.

c) Our life in the world when we bear upon ourselves the Suffering of this world, and pour out our life for the life of the world.

Now all these three elements presuppose intimate union with the Unique Son, in His Body. *Obedience* to Jesus Christ would not make us Sons of God: we would then be only servants of the Son. And we have no Sonship apart from the Sonship of the Beloved, The Chosen, the Elect. It is in *union* with Him that we share in the Sonship.

Neither can we come face to face with the Father in worship by simply *obeying* the Son. It is in *union* with Him that we have access with confidence into the presence of the Father in the Eucharist (Eph. 3:12, Heb. 4:16, Heb. 10:19, 1 Jn. 3: 21).

And finally we cannot serve the world and manifest the glory of God's grace in mere *obedience* to the Lord. It is in *Union* with His continuing ministry of Suffering Service to the world that we serve. "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24) says the Apostle Paul. It is Christ in us who serves in suffering and thereby glorifies the Father in the world.

Gospel and Baptism, Self-offering in the Eucharist, Service in Suffering, all three in *union* with Christ, not merely in *obedience* to Him, are the constituent elements of the Church.

And He (the Father), has put the Universe (*ta panta*) under His (Christ's) feet, and has 'given Him as head' over all for the Church, which is His body, the *pleroma* of Him who fills the Universe in every respect" (Eph. 1:22-23).

What does *pleroma* mean here? *Abundant fullness* is its most literal translation. We are told in St. John 1:16. "From His *pleroma*, we have all received, grace upon grace." But it can also mean an *enriched fulfilment* as for example when the Apostle Paul says: "Agape is the *pleroma* of the Torah" (Romans 13:10. translated often). "Love is the fulfilling of the law"), *Pleroma* can also mean the *whole contents* of something as for example; "The Lord's is the earth, and its *pleroma*" (1 Cor. 10:26), or "until the *pleroma* of the Gentiles, come in, a hardening has come upon part of Israel" (Rom. 11: 25). But in none of these senses can the Church be the *pleroma* of Christ.

Its meaning in Ephesians, when understood, illuminates our total concept of what the Church is. Let us take first a non-controversial fourth meaning of the word *pleroma* as it occurs in Matt. 9:16 (Mark 2:21). "And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the *pleroma* here as "patch": The meaning here is "*that which fills the gap or* , supplies what is lacking." It can be applied, for example to a glass that is three-quarters full. The one quarter necessary to fill up the glass would be the *pleroma* of the three-quarters full glass. The word *pleroma* was used by the Gnostics to denote the whole realm of intermediary beings who filled the gap between God and the Universe (*Ta panta*).

The Church is thus the *pleroma* of Christ, in the sense that the "whole Christ" is the Incarnate Lord with His body, the *ecclesia*. The *ecclesia* *fills out* the Person of the Incarnate Lord. Christ referred to His own body as "My Father's house" (see the context of Jn. 2:16 and 21) and this is the "my Father's house" in which "there are many mansions" (Jn. 14:2). This Body of Christ is the body, which

is filled up quantitatively by the addition of believers' and qualitatively by growth in agape (Eph. 4:16). The Church is the *OIDOS THEOU* (1 Tim. 3:15).

The Church is the pleroma of Christ also in a second way:

The purpose of the Incarnation was to plant within the realm of perishing history, the imperishable "my Father's house", where God in His glorious grace is manifested. The physical body of Christ was the place where the Holy Spirit abode, and God manifested Himself in His house, the Incarnate flesh of Jesus Christ (especially at the Baptism and the Transfiguration).

After the Resurrection and Pentecost, the House of God is the abode of the Holy Trinity on earth, in history. It is Christ's body, the Church, in which Christians live. But as it is *Christ's* body, Christ lives in it. We know that it was constituted by the *Holy Spirit* as He came on the day of Pentecost and abode on the disciples, It is "my Father's house" as we have already seen. Thus the Church is the abiding and self-manifesting place of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Ephesians 3:14-19 makes this point clearly, that as the Spirit strengthens and empowers the ecclesia and Christ dwells in us through faith all the Saints together, rooted and grounded in love, become filled with the whole pleroma of God, the abundant fullness of his rich and glorious grace. The Church, on heaven and on earth, is Christ's body, that which fills out and completes His person.

The Church is the pleroma of Christ in a third way, which is not clearly spelt out in the passage for our study today. The ecclesia fills the gap between God and the World. Christ reconciled the World to God the Father, having overthrown all the authorities and powers and dominations that hold sway over it in revolt against God.

Colossians 1:9 and 2:9 speak of Christ as the Pleroma, as He who fills the gap between God and the world, by filling the world with Himself (see also Eph. 4:10). But so are the Christians with all the believers, to "comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth" and in that process become fully united with Christ and be filled with the pleroma of God (Eph. 13:17-19).

Here again I feel embarrassed about having to offend my anti-metaphysical Western brethren, but clearly the work of the Church is not to be limited to the historical world in our time. The whole historical world is included in the scope of the Church's ministry, but it extends much farther in all directions. Height and depth (Hypsos and Bythos) were definitely astrological terms current in St. Paul's day, and length and breadth probably refers to the oikoumenou, the whole inhabited earth. St. Paul labours the point further in Ephesians. He has already said, in 3:10, "that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies." And later on, in 4:9, 10 "In saying, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill the total Universe."

The third sense in which the Church is the Pleroma of Christ is that, in Union with Christ, (rooted and grounded in Christ's love), we fill the whole universe, visible, as well as invisible. Thereby we become in Christ that which fills the gap between God and His creation, not by standing in the gap but by permeating the historical as well the unseen world with our ecclesial presence.

It needs to be made clear that when I, as an Eastern Christian, speak of the Church, I am not thinking of any one particular Church, here in the historical world, but of the total reality of the church, the one Body of Christ which comprehends all the Saints with Christ dwelling in them.

It is important for us to remember all these facts if we are to have a proper perspective on Inter-Church Aid and World Service. Let me summarize the main points:

a) The nature of the Church is dependent on its vocation, (I) to be Sons of God through the Gospel and through baptism, (II) to be sanctified and cleansed and to offer ourselves to the Father in the Eucharist and (III) to manifest concretely in the life of the Christian Community, the tremendous Grace and Truth of God in Christ.

b) The Church fulfills her vocation not merely by obeying her Lord, but by being in union with Him. The church is not a mere function of Mission, to be cast away when the Mission has been fulfilled. It is the "House of God" where the Holy Trinity abides, the foundation being Jesus Christ the Incarnate Lord.

c) The Church is the pleroma, of Christ in the sense that (a) the whole Christ is Christ with His body, the Church, (b) it is filled by the fullness of God the Holy Trinity and (c) it fills the universe, seen and unseen, with its presence.

d) Its ministry is not limited to the visible world of today, but extends to the "heavenlies" where the defeated powers are yet to be completely thrown out (or redeemed?). And our work in the world should not therefore be evaluated merely in terms of its immediate results as Christ's life could not be measured in terms of its immediate consequences.

Ephesians 1:3 - 2:10 (Paraphrase)

Glory be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has graciously bestowed on us in Christ every conceivable spiritual blessing belonging to the heavenly realms. He has elected us in Jesus Christ, even before the beginning of creation, in order that we may stand in his presence, holy, without blame or blemish, and bound together in love. He has also decided beforehand, by His gracious will and purpose, that we should, again in Jesus Christ, be adopted as God's children and heirs.

All this in order to manifest the excellent glory of His gracious goodness which He has most generously bestowed on us in the Beloved One.

For it is in this Beloved One we have been bought off from the domain of Sin at the price of His blood; and in accordance with the abundance of His grace, He has not only forgiven us our sins, but has also lavishly bestowed on us all wisdom, and insight into the mystery of His holy purpose. What is this gracious purpose which He sets forth in Jesus Christ? This, namely that when the hour of destiny strikes He would gather together the whole created order - the vis-

ible as well as the invisible, the earthly as well as the heavenly - into a harmonious universe in Jesus Christ.

Yes, in Jesus Christ, in whom we ourselves have been called, destined by the purpose of Him Who works in the Universe in accordance with the goals He has set for it, and in whom we who have been the first to set our hope in Jesus Christ are to exist in the world for the manifestation of His glorious excellence. You also are incorporated into Him by virtue of your having listened to the word of truth, the good news announcing your salvation. It is in Him that you put your trust and were branded with the Holy Spirit as promised, Who is so to speak, the token of ownership and first, instalment of our inheritance, until such time as we come into full possession of what has been bought for us by Him - all for the open manifestation of His glorious excellence.

Because of all this, and also since I heard your firm abiding in Jesus Christ, and of the love that prevails amongst the whole Christian community, I myself continuously give thanks to God for what He has done among you. I never cease to remember you in my prayers, beseeching the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source and Father of all glory and excellence, that He may grant you the spirit of divine wisdom and of the revelation of His own knowledge, that with your inner vision illumined, you may discern the nature of the hope to which he has called you, that you may get an insight into the abundant vastness and excellence of the inheritance kept in store for you to share with all those who are called and sanctified by Him. I also pray that you may catch a vision of the super-abundant power which He wields in might and strength to fulfill His own purposes, the chief sign of which was His raising of Christ from amidst the dead and exalting Him to sit at His own right hand wielding all God's power and authority in the heavenly realms over the rulers, powers, authorities, and lordships that have any existence in the created order, not only in this age of history, but also in the age to come.

God has subdued everything in creation to Jesus Christ, and has given Him to the Church to be Head of the whole created order. And the Church is His body, the *plerorna* of Him that fills out the whole Universe in every aspect.

And you - you were virtually dead in your transgressions and your sins which characterized your former way of life when you lived in accordance with the patterns of this world and with the desires of him who still rules in the unseen realm, by which I mean that evil spirit who now operates those who insist on remaining in the realm of unfaith. That was also the pattern of life by which we formerly lived, seeking mainly to fulfill the desires of our sinful flesh and of our polluted imaginations, thus belonging along with the rest of mankind, to those on whom God's wrath justly falls.

But now God, Whose mercy is fathomless and Who loves us with a tremendous love, has made us alive together with Christ even when we were actually dead by our sinfulness and our iniquities - this is His grace. Not only did He quicken us from death, but actually raised us up along with Christ, so that we now sit with Him in the heavenly realms, being part of his very being. This was in order to manifest, even to the coming ages of history, the stupendous wealth of His grace revealed in his amazing kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

And it is by sheer grace that we have now been saved through faith - nothing of our own doing, but the gracious gift of God; nothing for us to brag about, for the gift was not earned by our works. For we are His artistic creation, newly brought into being in Jesus Christ for works of love and goodness, the setting for which also God has prepared so that we might practice these works and thereby show forth his glorious excellence.

The Function of the Church Only in the Historical or also in the Eternal?

**Colossians 1:24 - 2:7
2 Corinthians 8 & 9**

The “Function of the Church” is not only an unromantic term, but what is worse, also rather un-biblical. But then I take comfort in the fact that the “mission of the Church” is also not a Biblical phrase, but one that has its origin in the modern western missionary movement.

Besides, we cannot always think in Biblical terms. Most of the words we use in our Church discussions come from outside the New Testament. Neither the New Testament pattern nor the teaching of the New Testament actually determines the life of the Church today. To take one minor example, where in the New Testament can you find a clear injunction that Christians are to be involved in political responsibility or national reconstruction or international reconciliation? The New Testament Church lived in a different World. The patterns of the New Testament as well as the actual teaching of the New Testament on social and political responsibility were relevant to the world in which they arise. They may or may not be relevant to our world. Where they are not relevant, any attempt to keep the New Testament pattern or in some cases even its direct teaching may be to violate the responsibility God has given to His Church in our present-day world.

I am conscious that this position would not be acceptable to many of you. I wish to point out however that the early post-Apostolic

Church had to develop patterns different from that of the time when the Apostles were alive and the Church in the 4th and 5th century was forced into new patterns and new understandings. But in all times the Holy Spirit is at work to guide the mind of the Church to the right teaching and the right patterns. Only through a fruitful tension between our understanding of the New Testament, the traditional understanding of the nature of the Church throughout its history, and a current understanding of the nature of the world in which we are placed, can we formulate a valid understanding of the nature and function of the Christian Church in the world of today.

In the Colossians passage for our study today, St. Paul speaks of his special ministry. It is a ministry first of all, of "rejoicing in Suffering" (1:24). As Saul the Persecutor of Christians he had inflicted suffering on those whom he then considered enemies of God, but the great turning point in his life gave him an entirely different view towards the evil present in the world. No longer was he to overcome evil by the use of force, whether in the form of political power or military might. He was on the other hand, to *share*, both emotionally and actively, in the suffering of the world. He became convinced that as the Lord suffered on behalf of the World, he had been called to continue the ministry of suffering.

The Church is called, as it found out in the early centuries, to participate in the continuing suffering of the Son of Man. In some parts of the world today all that a Christian can do is to suffer and rejoice in that suffering. This is a significant part of the ministry of the Church, and we in the more affluent and active Churches should under no circumstances minimize the historical and eternal significance of suffering for the sake of the Gospel, especially in some countries where to give up the faith would be no longer to need to suffer. And only those who have learned to suffer for the Gospel and rejoice in the midst of that suffering know the profundity of the truth of God's being and presence.

In the second place, St. Paul sees his special ministry as one directed towards the world and especially to the Gentile Church, but not necessarily in terms of Service as we see it or as involvement in

political and social responsibility, but primarily “to make known among the Gentiles the rich glory of the mystery of Him who is present in you and who is assurance of all glory (that man covets for), namely Christ” (V 27). It is not merely by preaching the Gospel that this is done, but also “by admonishing each man and instructing him in true wisdom, in order to ensure the presence (in the universe) of men who are mature in Christ” (V 28). “To this end I labour and toil, struggling with the aid of all the energy by which He empowers me” (V 29).

This is not a striving for producing mature individuals as the verses just quoted might seem to indicate. It is a desire and a striving on behalf of all Christians, whether in the Churches established by the Apostle or otherwise, “that their inner being (hearts) may be strengthened together by being mutually bound in agape, in order to possess full conviction and understanding, to ensure the perception of God’s mystery, namely of Christ, in whom is hidden away all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:2-3).

In other words it is not only the proclamation of the Gospel that calls for unity, but also the need for conviction, spiritual power, and understanding. Without a community of love, none of these three essentials of the Christian Church would be available in full measure. And St. Paul’s ministry is seen as not only of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, but also of building up a Universal Community of Love.

The question remains: how is this community built up? The answer is given partly in Colossians 2: 6-7, and partly in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 which is our second passage for study today. Colossians 2:6-7 says: “So, as you have already accepted Christ Jesus the Lord, let your common life also be in Him, striking root in Him, built up (as a community) in Him, firmly established in the *pistis* that has been taught you and overflowing and abounding in *eucharista*.”

You must forgive me for having some words untranslated, for the moment we use modern language words like ‘faith’ or ‘thanksgiving’, we assimilate the rich content of these words to the pedestrian terms of our impoverished practice.

We note in this passage two distinctive elements: the inner growth

of the common life of the community in love and faith, and the outflow in eucharist. These are however inseparable - for they were both accomplished in the Eucharistic worship of the early Church. It was when the Church assembled for worship on the Lord's day that its awareness of unity in Christ came to focus in the instruction and self-offering of the Church. But the Eucharistic gathering was not the whole of the process of oikodome (building up) and eucharistia (the flowing out of grace). It was, as said already, the focal point in a periodic rhythm. The common life of mutual love of the Church, and the loving service rendered to the world, for seven (not just six) days in the week, year in and year out, constituted the field from which the community was gathered for worship and to which it was dispersed for loving service.

It is strange that nowhere in St. Paul's epistles to the Churches do we find the Apostle asking them to be "witnesses"; "to witness" to St. Paul meant "to assert with conviction" and he never once, as far as I know, says to the Churches that they should "bear witness" (*martureo*) to Christ: *marturia* and *martureo* are not words used by the Apostle to denote the mission of the Church. His usual words are *oikodome* (edification) *peripatesis* (Greek equivalent of Hebrew *Halachah*, the word translated *walking*, but really the Jewish Word for *ethics*), *hupotasso* (to give in to each other), *agapeo* (to love each other), *anechomai* (to forbear each other), all words which relate to the common life in the Christian community. In other words the *being* of the Church was of greater concern to the Apostle than its *doing* or talking; not that these are separable from being, but rather that doing and speaking are to come out of being in order to have validity.

Closely related to this new Being of the Church is its double focus in LEITOURGEIA. The Church is so filled with the fullness of the grace and goodness of God, that it has to overflow, so to speak in two directions. On the one hand when we consider the mercies of God, the proper response before we turn towards the world to talk or to serve, is "to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, sacred and pleasing to God, which is our *logike Latreia* (translated 'reasonable service' or 'spiritual worship') *Logike latreia* does not mean either reason-

able service or spiritual worship, but rather denotes the new cult, where in place of dumb (alogos) and dead animals, rational (logikos) and living human beings are sacrificed in God. This phrase *logike latreia* has from the early centuries become a technical term for the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, the Church in heaven and on earth, present wherever the Congregation is gathered for the offering of itself in Christ, pours itself out to God in deep and adoring thanksgiving. This bridely dedication to God the Father writes the Church to Christ in His eternal offering, and periodically transfigures the being of the Church. For the offering is accepted by God and He gives Himself to us in the Body Blood of our Lord. This mutual giving of each other between God and the Church was the great mystery of the life of the Church; This was a mystery that the Church did not talk or write about in the New Testament or in later times. It was sacred as the sexual relationship of the husband and wife. Corrupted, it could become hell, but properly participated it was the secret spring of the life of the Church.

On the other hand the bounty of God was to overflow in the direction of one's fellow-men. Not merely to give of one's possessions, but to kneel and serve, as our Lord Himself had demonstrated in the Upper Room as the meaning and outflow of the Eucharist which he instituted on the same occasion. The early Christian Church's abortive attempt at a communism of consumption was an expression of this "one bread which we break." The concept of the Church serving the world outside does not appear very developed in the New Testament, but the exhortation to works of charity (*xapis* = grace) draws no clear lines between the world and the Church.

The situation in II Corinthians 8 and 9 is a case in point. There was this great famine in Palestine, and St. Paul used this occasion for a demonstration of the unity between the Gentile and Jewish Churches which were showing signs of drifting apart. He took a large collection in Achaia, Macedonia, Corinth and in the other Gentile Churches, and took it himself to Jerusalem (Romans 15:25). There is no real reason to believe, if the famine affected believing and unbelieving Jews alike in Jerusalem that aid was given only to believers.

In any case, we see that Inter-Church aid was from the very beginning a significant expression of the Unity of the Church, even when there was emotional, racial, national and even theological division in the Church. But such aid was:

- a) The outflow of God's grace, and
- b) led to eucharistia or thanksgivings.

II Corinthians 8:1-2 makes it clear that the Macedonian Churches were not rich in material resources, yet when the grace (charis) of God produced this "abundance of joy (chara)", it overflowed with a wealth of generosity. This has to happen in our Churches also, that the "abundance of joy" produced in very poor Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America, must "overflow with a richness of generosity" to the more well-off Churches in the West.

Only then can there be a true "overflow of thankfulness" all over the Universal Church. There has to develop this mutual sense of generosity and thankfulness between the rich Churches and the "poor Churches", in that the great generosity of the Grace of God might be experienced in the Universal Church, and there can be true eucharistia towards God and towards each other in the Universal Church.

Essentially the same thing has to happen between the Church and the World as well. The glory of God is His grace. The way this grace is made known to the world is not merely through evangelistic preaching or through prophetic pronouncements on social and international affairs. The greatest elements in the life of the Church are its worship in which the grace of God transforms the life of the Church, and its work. Which is God manifesting His grace and truth through three main factors.

- a) The life of the community in love which draws and moulds the World to become in itself, along with the Church, a true human community of love. This is what Jesus Christ did to the Apostolic Community.

- b) The service of the Community towards the world, in which the Church bears upon itself the poverty and suffering of the world and serves its needs in love. This is what Jesus Christ did to the poor and

the lowly of His day.

c) By proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the world as the place of God's love where orphaned, mankind can find its true home, and building up those who came into the intimate and committed community of the Church.

But none of the three ways in which God manifests His glorious grace towards the world are normally available to God except as the chosen community, the Church, continues to surrender itself to God, to be transfigured by Him, to be empowered and used by His Grace.

This is why the word *Leitourgeia* is used in the Bible for both service of God at the altar and for service of man. It is always from the altar of the Holy Trinity that the mission to the world goes out, when the Priest dismisses the congregation with the words "Go in Peace"; and it is to the altar that we always come back as the Holy Priesthood, bringing the world with us in our self-offering to the Father.

Colossians 1:24 - 2:7 (Paraphrase)

It is a service of joy for me to suffer for your sake, for I am only filling up and completing in my flesh the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the Church. In God's economy He has assigned it to me to serve her as a minister in fulfilling the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden for so many ages and generations in the past but is now revealed to His holy ones to whom He has chosen to open it up, to show them the tremendous wealth of God's glory in this mystery among the Gentiles. The mystery is the fact of Christ's presence within you. This is the assurance and hope of all glory that man craves for. And this mystery is what I myself proclaim, convincing and instructing every man in all wisdom, in order to present every man full-grown in Jesus Christ. This is the purpose toward which I toil, agonizing and striving in proportion to the power and energy which He instils in me.

For I want you to know that I do agonize for you, and for the people at Laodicea, as well as for all the brethren who have not seen me face to face. My concern is that their inner being should be

strengthened by being mutually knit together in love, and that they may discern with deep conviction the mystery of God in all its vast abundance of grace and gain an enriched understanding of Christ in whom are hidden away all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this for a special reason. There are plenty of Sophists among you who can beguile you with a lot of empty talk. Even when I am bodily absent from your midst, I am fully with you in Spirit, rejoicing to see your orderliness and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

You *have received* Christ Jesus the Lord. Now you should also *live your life in Him*, which you can do only if you are deeply rooted and firmly built up in Him, so that you are secure and established in the faith in which you have been instructed, always overflowing in Eucharistia.

The Nature of the Unity We Seek

Unity for Worship and Unity for Service

Romans 15

One of the slogans frequently heard in Ecumenical circles which makes some of us bewildered is: “The Church is a function of the Mission.” I am not always sure what this means. We all can understand it the other way, that Mission is a function of the Church. But I suppose the sloganists use the word function in some other sense, e.g., in the sense that $ax^2 + bx + c$ is a function of x . But I am not sure that this is what they mean, and all I can say at present is that the slogan puzzles me and that I do not understand it.

Another statement which has a higher standing in World Council circles is “Unity is not an end in itself. Unity is for Mission.” That slogan does not puzzle me so much, I am even given the Scriptural reference which supports this second slogan, namely John 17-21 (also 23). “That they all may be one... So that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” The Church then, I am told by some for whom my respect is very high, is but an instrumental or functional unit in God’s economy.

We all know that the modern Ecumenical movement has its roots in the Protestant missionary movement, and in that sense historically the need for union has been realized in the context of problems raised on the mission field.

But from a Biblical-theological point of view this conception of the relationship between the Church and its mission seems unten-

able. "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:18). Was the Incarnation merely functional in the economy of God or does it have an ontological reality beyond time?

Is the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Second Person of the Trinity a mere temporary affair for thirty-three years, or is it now an eternal fact? Is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ a mere function of God's economy, or is it an ontological - eternal fact? If we believe that it is more than a 'faith-event', then the same applies to the nature of those whom God has united to the Body of the Risen Jesus. I know I have a mission as a member of the Body of Christ, but my new being is not a result of my carrying out that mission. It is the free gift of God, to me, not dependent on anything else but the sheer Grace of Him who has called me out of non-being to be His beloved son.

To believe that by working together we are going to find our unity is to conceive the unity of the Church in terms of the unity that exists among all the workers in a General Motors plant.

The whole of the didactic section in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (chapters 12 to 15) is on this question of the Unity of the Church and its mission in the world. We will devote ourselves in our last study to the conclusion of this Section Chapter 15.

"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves." This we are always prepared to do. In fact there are Churches today that are so strong that no one can stop them from aiding the weaker Churches in Asia and Africa. But their strength may not always be combined with wisdom, and so we need to listen to the Apostle's words in the second verse, "Let each of us please his neighbour for his benefit with a view to building up." There is real danger even in this "post-paternalistic" era of Christian mission, of imposing our aid on weaker Churches, with a view to pleasing ourselves by the thought that we have helped the weak. Most of us have become painfully aware of the dangers of 'propagation by procreation' in Missions, of reproducing in Asia, Africa and Latin America institutions and patterns which have been found to 'work' in the Western world. It is a tragedy that many of the Christian lead-

ers in the weak Churches are often too prone to co-operate in such "procreation" especially when the offer to duplicate the patterns and institutions of the stronger Churches in the setting of the weaker Churches is accompanied by tempting monetary aid.

There are three things to be noticed about the first part of Romans 15: (v. 1-13).

1. Of course, St. Paul writing to the Romans was not speaking specifically about the relationship between the *Churches*, what he means by the "strong" and the "weak" are *individuals and groups within one local Church*. The Apostle's primary concern however, was always the building up of love (agape) within *and* between all units of the Universal Church. Inter-Church Aid should be given not merely for the sake of *mission* but also in order to *build up* or to bind together in a living relationship. We have to see that our aid to the weak always builds a relationship of genuine love between the giver and the receiver.

2. There is a great danger in Inter-Church Aid, (I am not talking of the work of DICAORS but rather of the whole picture of world church relationships), that just because the continuance of some work abroad seems necessary for keeping up the interest of the people at home, we are not to engage in large-scale projects of aid. It is much easier to raise money for a project in Africa and thus keep a programme going in a Western Church, than to interest the congregation in the problems of their own society. Here there is danger that our aid becomes an item in *our* programme, rather than a means of fulfilling the needs of *others*. The subtle temptation of seeking to please ourselves in our Christian Service has to be guarded against.

3. Thirdly, ultimately all aid must redound to the glory of God. Giver and receiver should be able, "in harmony with each other and in accord with Jesus Christ", to lift up their hearts in genuine thankfulness to God our Father for the love of God which has been manifested through work together (Romans 15:5-6).

It must also be an occasion for genuine thanksgiving to God on the part of non-Christians, who have been served by the local Church and the aiding Church. "In order that the Gentiles might glorify God

for his mercy" (v 9).

These are good tests by which to evaluate the quality and usefulness of our inter-Church aid projects. Aid, or Service, as we have seen is not merely the fruit of worship, but must also result in worship. The mission of the Church whether in evangelism or in *diakonia* must always spring from worship and result in worship.

The unity of the Church is not in mission. The unity of the Church is in the One Holy Trinity. The ultimate purpose towards which we should work is that there is one Church which has a common *understanding* of itself, of God, and of the world, which turns in one accord to *worship* God, and then is *dispersed* in the world for mission.

We shall not study the Second part of Romans 15 in detail. Only two points can be emphasized here.

1. St. Paul speaks of a two-fold ministry given to himself, one to be the *leiturgos* of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, and the other to be the occasion for making the Gentiles *prosphora* (offering - sacrifice, word used for Old Testament sacrifices and in New Testament times for the Eucharist itself) acceptable and pleasing to God (v. 16). The ministry of the Church as a whole must follow the same pattern. It stands always between God and the world, identified with both, manifesting God to the world through word, and work, through life and Gospel, and also perpetually offering ourselves as a sacrifice to God on behalf of the world. Both these functions, needless to say, are done in union with Christ.

It is tragic that we are too prone to conceive the work of the Church, and at times even the whole question of renewal of the Church, purely in terms of "study" and action. Are we simply to "study" the Gospel and then "study" society, and then to have a "programme" for action. We sometimes think renewal will come this way. We even fondly hope that Unity will come as a by-product of study and action in Mission.

Renewal of the Church is primarily an act of God. It is when Christ and the Holy Spirit quickens the Church to turn towards Him that the Church begins to be transfigured. It is in this transfiguration

that all unity and mission becomes realized. A transfigured community is drawn towards the love of God, and unity and mission are both the fruit of love, not primarily of study and action. It is my humble but firm desire that in the world Church, whether in the World Council or otherwise, we should pioneer in the area of *renewal by transfiguration*; this must begin in small communities who have a deep experience of genuine worship, and in the context of worship develop a community of real love, and as communities living in *Eucharistia* and *Agape*, study and serve. Worship must become living, throbbing, vital, quickening. This will not occur through better preaching, nor will it happen through a use of traditional forms. The traditional forms, and I am referring to the forms as they came to fruition in the fourth and fifth centuries, embody a concept of worship which is not yet fully grasped by us. It is by recapturing the *spirit of the worship* that we can make our own worship meaningful.

But we are not bound by this tradition in a rigid way. The offering of the Church in the Eucharist was always on behalf of the World. The Holy Spirit has, however, in our generation, led us to an understanding of the world which was never possible in previous generations. So our traditional understanding of worship must be enhanced and enriched by our new knowledge of the world. At this point all of us, whether Catholic or Evangelical, have to learn our lesson anew.

But the double meaning of *Leitourgia* as the Church standing before God on behalf of the world and before the world on behalf of God should be recovered. This is the true purpose and significance of the Liturgical Movement and not the re-introduction of formal worship. We in the World Council need to pay attention to this Liturgical Movement which is the corollary of the "discovery of the world" by the Church in our time. In Romans 15:27 the Apostle calls the relief aid of the Macedonian and Achaian churches to the people in Jerusalem as their *leitourgia*. The Liturgical Movement, where it has not gone too "spiky" has both poles of *Leitourgia* in mind, God and the world. I put in a strong plea on behalf of this new theological understanding of the Church, its unity and its mission. This should become a major concern of the member Churches of the World Council in the years to come.

2. The second point relates to a different kind of polarity that the Apostle reminds us of in this chapter.

Inter-Church Aid must not only comprehend worship and work. It must truly be mutual. The great danger of the wealthy-Churches of the West going on *giving* aid to the poorer Churches, without receiving some aid from them, is maleficent for both groups. In the giver it produces an undue sense of its own comparative significance and in the receiver it cultivates on the one hand, a parasitic and therefore demoralizing attitude towards the wealthier Churches, and on the other hand also develops feelings of resentment against those on whom He is so inescapably dependent.

The western Churches have begun to accept help from the Asian-African-Latin American Churches in the form of personnel Projects like the "Fellowship of the Least Coin" also provide an avenue for this two-way aid. But the poorer Churches must now take the initiative in developing a spiritual heritage along with our Western brethren. This is not merely a question of regaining our self respect. The Western Church is much poorer than it is at present willing to admit. Wealth, in the New Testament, is not money, but love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22). In these perhaps there are possibilities that the financially poorer Churches can share their wealth with the Western world. The Western Church, ie us all hope, will not be too dogmatic about its functional conception of the world, and be willing to be transformed by Christ into a more sacramental understanding of the world. I have no time to explain that particular phrase, but what I mean is that this world is a "bearer of God", that human life is not meant merely to work hard and produce useful things, but truly to manifest the righteousness of God in a historical form.

At the point of these fruits of the Spirit, in spite of our deterioration in this technological age, the Christians of Asia, Africa and Latin America have a job, not merely of intellectualizing and transmitting the Western Churches 'studies' on the fruits of the Spirit, but of genuinely manifesting these fruits in the life of our Churches in such a form as to affect the lives of the Western Churches. This cannot be

done by the use of reams of mimeographed paper which we produce in our Churches. But this too can happen only when our poorer Churches turn to God in deep adoration, and allow our common life to be transformed by the spirit who will bear these fruits in our lives.

We must take the initiative in developing the technique of renewal, not through study and action, but through worship and peaceful joy. At present these two are the greatest needs of the Western Church. We in the poorer Churches are temperamentally better suited to produce these fruits if we will allow the Spirit to renew our Inner being. And thus while our brethren in the West aid us with the fruits of their technological civilization, namely money and technique, we who have only ourselves to give to them, shall by turning to God be transformed into beings that bring peace and joy to the whole World. "Blessed are the Peace-makers (but not necessarily the pace-makers), for they shall be called the Sons of God."

In that common sonship, O Lord our God, may we thy people all over the world be united, that we may magnify thy name with one accord, and serve in peace and joy.

Romans 15 (paraphrase)

We who have ability and strength are obliged to undergird and support those who are incapable and weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us has a responsibility to do what is pleasing to our neighbour, what is good for building up community. 'For even Christ Himself was not seeking to please Himself, rather, as the Scripture says, "the vilifications of those that vilify Thee have fallen upon me."' Now things like that written in the past have been written for our instruction, to aid us in maintaining our assurance and hope, by the encouragement the Scriptures give in the midst of adversity and opposition. May the God who encourages and strengthens us in the midst of adversity and opposition grant it to you to have a common mind amongst each other in accordance with the mind of Christ, so that in mutual harmony and with a common voice you may be able to praise and magnify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So accept each other, even as Christ has accepted you, all to the

glory of God. I want to affirm that Jesus Christ became a servant of the circumcised in order to confirm the promise made to the fathers of Israel and in order that the Gentiles may praise God for His mercy.

May God who has given us assurance fill you with all joy and peace in abiding in Him, so that you may overflow in this blessed assurance by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have no doubt, my brothers, that you are already filled with all goodness and wisdom, and are able to impart Christian conviction to each other. On certain points I have written to you in brief, with some audacity, simply to remind you of these things, by virtue of the grace assigned to me by God to be the Apostle to the nations, to be the priest who ministers the Gospel to the nations in order to make the offering of the nations acceptable by the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit.

You see I have some reason for gratification in Christ Jesus concerning what has been offered to God from the Gentiles. I will not venture to speak too much about what Christ has done through me to secure the obedience of the nations, both by word and by work, by the power of signs and miracles, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now I have fulfilled the proclamation of the Gospel all the way from Jerusalem and environs to Yugoslavia. ... This is why I have not yet been able to visit you though I have often wanted to. But now that I have covered this area and since I have been longing for many years to see you people in Rome, I plan to stop off with you on my way to Spain.

At present I am on my way back to Jerusalem to serve the Jewish Christians there. For the Churches in Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share what they have with the poorer brethren in Jerusalem. They have done it with gladness, though of course it is their duty to do so. For if the Gentile nations have shared in the spiritual riches of the Jewish nation, it is their duty to serve (Citourgeo) then in things necessary for the body.

So when I have finished this Job and have sealed and delivered to them this fruit of the Gospel, I shall go on to Spain by way of Rome. I know that the fullness of the blessing of Christ: will be in me when

I have fulfilled this inter-Church sharing. So I beg, you, my brothers, through our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Holy Spirit, that you will co-agonize with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, both that I may be rescued from the hands of unbelievers in Judea, and that the offering I carry with me to Jerusalem would prove acceptable to the brethren there. Only so can I come to you, by God's will, in the fullness of joy and we can be mutually strengthen in your fellowship. The God of Peace be with you all. Amen.



Part 3
Promise, Hope & Witness

1

Students in the Asian Revolution

Revolution is today the fashionable word in theology. From the end of the second world war till recently the word was crisis. We seem now to have outlived the Theology of Crisis, associated with great names like Barth and Niebuhr.

Why this great interest in Revolution and the Theology of Revolution? For two reasons:

In Latin America especially, and to a lesser degree in Asia and Africa, there is a wide-spread disillusionment about democratic and parliamentary methods of changing society. The poor have no hopes that democracy will give them bread. The chains that bind them are in the hands of those who control the status quo through the so-called democratic process. Only a thorough and radical change can bring about even the hope of bread; clothing and shelter for all the poor of the world and many students see no other meaning for life than to launch themselves into this revolutionary struggle for justice.

Secondly, even in affluent western society there is a growing conviction that society as a whole is sick. The urban-technological paradise of earlier dreams has suddenly gone sour for many. The values of the consumer society are today questioned by competent and sober economists like professor Galbraith. Why should we work so hard? To keep feeding the giant technocratemachine that has chained even the affluent to itself? The ordinary people in the so-called rich nations are not free. They are told what to do by their Governments, their military establishment, their mass media, their industrial complexes, their bankers and money bag all of which are controlled by the sinister technocratic machine which no one can see or fight. Universities are also caught up in the mesh.

The rich and the poor alike are everywhere in bonds. How do we bring liberation? That is the salvation for which men are hungry today? Can it be brought about in the framework of the existing na-

tional and institutional structures? Is there any hope in patching up the present structures? Do we not need a revolution? But is not revolution against the teaching of Christ? Does not Christ teach nonviolence? Is it not important to maintain law and order? What is the role of students in transforming society?

These are the questions our conference wants to face. The six Bible studies are related to these questions.

Salvation in Christ

(a) Economic and Social Righteousness

Isaiah 25:1-9, 58: 3-12

The salvation for which the Jews looked forward on the basis of prophecy, was certainly more than the salvation of the soul. There are many visions of God's salvation in the Old Testament.

See for example Jer 30:18-22
 Joel 2:21-29
 Amos 9:13-15

For our study we have chosen two passages from the prophecy of Isaiah. The two passages probably come from two prophets of the same name, separated from each other by centuries.

The first passage, Isaiah 25:1-9, comes from the latter half of the eighth century B.C. Judah, the country of the Jews (southern Palestine) was ruled by an unworthy king Ahaz when her very existence was threatened by an Assyrian invasion. This passage comes probably from the period of Hezekiah, the successor of Ahaz. Isaiah was probably related to the king or at least was of a high position in the royal house.

The 25th chapter was composed probably on the occasion of a great military victory, and the downfall of a heathen city.

The text is complicated. Only a paraphrase can bring out the meaning.

The passage describes the prophet's vision of God's salvation (25:9). Its main elements of salvation seem to be

- a) Security and peace
- b) protection and welfare of the poor and needy
- c) a sumptuous feast of good things to eat and drink
- d) the dispelling of gloom and despondency and the wiping away of tears
- e) the overcoming of death itself.

The other passage, Isaiah 58:3-12, comes from a much later period, probably from the fourth or third century B.C. The concern for social righteousness is much more at the centre. What are the evils attacked?

- a) oppression of workers (58:3)
- b) selfish pleasure-seeking (58:3)
- c) quarrelling and fighting (58:4)

The demand is now that salvation has to be worked out, at least in part, by the Jews themselves: they should.

- a) eliminate cruelty and oppression
- b) remove enslavement and humiliation from all groups in society
- c) there has to be an equitable sharing of goods
- d) the poor have to be housed and clothed
- e) men must pour themselves out in the service of the needy.

Discussion Questions

- a) How does the notion of salvation indicated in the Old Testament prophecies compare with our current notions?
- b) How does the Incarnation, death and Resurrection of Christ help this kind of salvation?

Salvation in Christ

(b) Personal Destiny and character

Lk. 12:15-40, Jn. 14:1-18

It would be preposterous to deny that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is addressed to individual persons also. We have chosen two passages for study which pinpoint the main elements of personal salvation.

a) To seek wealth, glory and power with intense desire leads to loss of one's being (Lk. 12:15-21).

b) But not to seek such is possible only if we can overcome our fundamental anxiety about our own future. Anxiety is the enemy of faith (Lk. 12:22-29).

c) Overcoming anxiety is possible only by complete commitment to God. Then our wholehearted seeking will be for the kingdom (the Reign) of God in the lives of all men (Lk. 12:30-34).

d) This faith, by which we overcome anxiety and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to God and His work, brings personal salvation. This assures your personal destiny, and builds in you the kingdom of God. It works from inside you to create righteousness (Jn. 14:12-18).

e) It should result in an expectant, watchful life, looking for the coming of the Lord in the various areas of life. Wherever good things are being done, it is the coming of our Lord, and we should participate (Lk. 12:35-40).

f) To believe in Christ means to dwell in His body (my father's house - see Jn. 2:16-21; 14:2) to let Christ abide in us, to walk in his way (i.e. to do his works), to pray (Jn. 14:13), to be shaped and formed by His Spirit, the spirit of Truth (Jn. 14:1-18).

Question

1. Where do we get the notion that Salvation means primarily to be delivered from hell and go to heaven? Is that Biblical?

2. Will a lot of righteous persons be able to change society or can we change society and thereby change persons? Give arguments for both sides, and try to arrive at a synthesis.

3. Is personal ambition against the will of God and an obstacle to salvation?

What is Government For?

Words of a Wise King

Wisdom 6:1-9 of Solomon 21-24. 1 Pet. 3:13-17

Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth. Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations. For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High, who will search out your works and inquire into your plans. Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly, nor keep the law, nor walk according to the purpose of God he will come upon you terribly and swiftly, because severe judgment falls on those in high places. For the lowliest man may be pardoned in mercy, but mighty men will be mightily tested. For the Lord of all will not stand in of any one, nor show deference to greatness; because he himself made both small and great, and he takes thought for all alike. But a strict inquiry is in store for the mighty. To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed, that you may learn wisdom and not transgress (Wis. 6:1-9).

Therefore if you delight in thrones and sceptres, O monarchs over the peoples, honour wisdom, that you may reign for ever. I will tell you what wisdom is and how she came to be, and I will hide no secrets from you, but I will trace her course from the beginning of creation, and make the knowledge of her clear, and I will not pass by the truth; neither will I travel in the company of sickly envy, for envy does not associate with wisdom. A multitude of wise men is the salvation of the world, and a sensible king is the stability of his people (wis. 21-24).

The wisdom of Solomon is a book of the Ancient Old Testament, regarded by the Reformers as an apocryphal book, by Roman Catholics as Deuterocanonical, and by the Orthodox as canonical. We need not take it as a basis for doctrinal teaching, but it is one of the books which has profoundly influenced the mind of the Apostle Paul. It was written down in its present form not earlier than the 2nd century B.C. (Solomon died ca. 933 B.C.).

It belongs to the type of literature known as Wisdom literature. This way of writing began probably in Alexandria among Jews who had fully imbibed western or Greek culture and philosophy.

a) The king's task, or the job of Government is a God-given task (Wisdom 3).

b) Governments are responsible to God and will be judged by God severely if they do not rule according to justice and the will and purpose of God (Wisdom 4-9).

c) The wisdom necessary for the king is the content of the whole book of wisdom, and the passages we have chosen from part of the introduction.

We have to find our own way in this matter. Listen to the first epistle of Peter.

1 Pet. 2:13-17: Be subordinate to all human institutions for the sake of the Lord - to the king as supreme civil authority, or to the governors as deputed by him to discipline the evil doers and to commend those who do good; for this is the will of God that through practicing the good you should silence the ignorant slander of the undiscerning; This can do by being free, and at the same time using your freedom not as a cloak for your evil deeds but as servants of God. Respect all human beings, love the Christian brotherhood, fear God, honour the king.

Discussion questions:

1. Who is the king today? Who is Government? Who is responsible to God for Government? Will we be judged for our neglect?

2. What is the will of God for our time? How do we find out what

Government ought to do everywhere in the world?

3. What are our national goals? Evaluate them in the light of what you understand to be the will of God today in our country.

4. Is there any difference in the Christian's responsibility in the State between the first century A.D. and the present time?

Law and Order

The Meaning of Revolution

Romans 13:1-7, Rev. 18:1-24

Romans 13:1-7. Paraphrase

Let every soul be subordinate to the authorities placed over him. For there is no authority which is not from God; whatever authority is in force is established by God anyone who is insubordinate to authority is insubordinate to God's establishment. So those who are so insubordinate will in our cendemnation. The Government authorities are no terror to the good, only to the evil. Do you wish not to fear authority? Then just do good, thus you can have only commendation from the authorities. For after all the man in authority is a minister of God for you in order to foster the good. If, however, you practice evil, then fear authority. He does not bear the sword for nothing. He is the minister of God for executing God's wrath upon the evil doer.

So one has by necessity to be subordinate, not just because of the wrath, but also on account of the purity of our own consciences. It is for the same reason that you pay taxes, for these authorities are sort of deacons of God who take up your offerings. Pay up all your dues - taxes to whom taxes are due, rate or revenue to those to whom that is due, fear to whom fear is due, respect to whom respect is due.

* * * * *

It is rather shocking to see St. Paul writing in this conservative vein to the Roman Christians, especially about a State which is called

“Babylon, Mother is Harlots” by the author of the Book of Revelation. It was a state which persecuted Christians, and we are in no doubt about St. Paul’s meaning in 12:14 - “Bless them which persecute you.”

Here in St. Paul we find an absolutization of whatever order exists as established by God, be it the most unjust and exploitative. This rather unusual form of Pauline subordinationism is not his private teaching. It belongs to the tradition of the Church which had already formed in apostolic times. The same teaching can be found in the writings of Peter as well (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

This was necessary because there was real danger that Christianity would become purely a political revolutionary movement directed to overthrow Roman authority. This was the temptation that constantly befell Jesus - to lead a political revolution and to liberate the Jews that way. The Christian revolution is much more profound, and it creates positive elements in society which ultimately lead to the overthrow of corrupt and unjust power.

A somewhat contrary view of the State appears in the book of Revelation. This is the lament on the fall of “Babylon the great”, which was a code name among the early Christians for the Roman Empire. It is, of course, God who has wreaked vengeance on, the unjust State, not the people organizing a revolution. In chapter 18, the seafaring merchants, weeping and mourning say to the church:

“Alas, alas, O great city
 in whom grew affluent
 every sea-faring ship
 from her treasure!
 In one hour she is ruined!
 Triumph over her, O heaven,
 And the saints and apostles and prophets!
 For God has executed judgment
 for you against her!” (18:19-20)

In this sense it is correct to say that the New Testament does not encourage an armed revolution on the part of Christians. We are asked to suffer patiently and to wait for the judgment of the Lord,

which is bound to fall on the unjust state. But the attitude towards the unjust Roman state is clearly more negative in Revelation than in St. Paul.

If order is thus established by God and to be changed only by God, then Christians have only to be passively obedient, whether the regime be good or evil. But is this the whole story?

Discussion Questions

1. In a democratic society, how do we pay up our dues to the State? Only by paying taxes? What else do we owe to the State? Who is the State?

2. What is the purpose of God for law and order? If a particular system of law and order does not fulfil that purpose, do Christian citizens have any responsibility for changing that system? Why? By what methods?

V

Violence and Non-Violence

Ahimsa and the Sermon on the Mount

Mt. 5:38-48 (Lk. 3:4-14)

The question is becoming urgent in countries like those of Latin America, where the oppression and exploitation have become unbearable. Foreign capitalist and traders have entered into league with the local bankers and feudal overlords to keep the nations in bondage. The army and the secret police, combined with the power of enormous wealth, keep the common people in a state of helpless slavery.

The question is - Is this not violence? By not applying violence against such violence, are we not ourselves supporting the violent exploitation of the people by the moneyed forces?

It is in this context we study the Sermon on the Mount and the preaching of St. John the Baptist.

Sermon on the Mount. Jesus appears here both as a traditional Rabbi teaching the law of Moses and as a new teacher with a new teaching based on his own authority. Moses teaching on “an eye for an eye” and “a tooth for a tooth” was based on the idea of parity or equality in justice. The context is two men fighting with each other (see Exodus 21:22 ff, Lev. 24:19 ff, Exodus 19:21). Quite often such a fight resulted in whole families wiping out each other, to wreak vengeance on each other. The law of an eye for an eye was thus a great improvement over the previous law, where the offended person himself, or his family, had to be both judge and executor.

The new law of showing the other cheek must have been a shock to the Jews who heard it. "Love your enemy, bless those who persecute you. ... so that you may be true sons of your Father."

The most important thing is not that Jesus brought a new law in place of the Old. What he brought is a new principle and standard for christian conduct. We are no longer to live by certain rules in the Bible. We are asked to be like our Father in Heaven. God sends rain on the just and the unjust, on the evil and the good (Mt. 5:45). We are to be like that, loving both the oppressor and the oppressed. The standard for our conduct is not a new set of rules or prescriptions. We are to respond to the image of God in christ, and to act in conformity with what we know to be the character of God.

Non-violence thus cannot be regarded as a new absolute rule, which we can obey literally. We are caught in the mesh of violence. Our society is a violent society. The rich oppress and exploit the poor. The poor destroy their own dignity by their egoism and selfishness. Violence breeds violence, and we cannot escape the responsibility for the endemic violence in our society. We cannot keep our hands clean.

The christian approach to the situation is then to ask: What does God want in this situation and how am I to act in conformity with what I know to be the character of God in Christ?

What does God want? Here the preaching of John the Baptist is extremely relevant. Are we genuinely repentant as a society, and ready to receive the Gospel? Then we must bring forth "fruits worthy of repentance", (Lk. 3:8) and thereby "prepare the way for the coming of the Lord." John repeats the prophecy of Isaiah which we looked at in our first study. Every valley, i.e. all the lower economic classes, have to be filled. Every mountain and hill, i.e. the super-rich and the rich, have to be brought low. The crooked has to be made straight, and the rough has to be made smooth. Corruption and dishonesty have to be removed from society. Only then shall all flesh see the salvation of the Lord (Lk. 3:6).

John gave some practical suggestions about how to produce this preparatory righteousness. Study these in Lk. 3:10-14.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the things that John the Baptist would say to our own society to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance?

2. Where is violence deeply entrenched in the present structure of society?

3. Does the Christian have any justification to use violence to end the violence that is already going on in society?

4. How would you relate the Ahimsa doctrine of Gandhi with Christian teaching? Would Gandhi, if he were living today, approve a revolution by force to end the oppression and exploitation in our society today?

Education and Students

Discipleship and Leadership

John 9:39 - 10:18

What is true Education? Is it not developing the capacity to see into the heart of reality and the skills to deal with reality in the best way?

Is university education meant to provide a cadre of leaders in society? If so what does leadership mean?

The Pharisees had one idea of leadership. They thought they saw into the heart of reality (9:41), but actually they are blind, they lead the people astray because they do not themselves see clearly. They liked to lay down the law for others to follow (Mt. 23:4). They do all their deeds to be seen by men, i.e. always with a political motive (Mt. 23:5). They like to have positions of prominence (23:6) and to be highly honoured by the public (23:7). This was their idea of leadership. Is ours really different?

Our Lord shows a different way in the 10th chapter of John. The image of the Good Shepherd may also be translated the “Good Leader”, for the word shepherd in the Old Testament is not used for spiritual leaders but for civil governors. The Good shepherd is the Good king, not the good pastor in our sense. What does the good king or the good leader do?

a) He knows his sheep by name (10:3). They recognize his voice. They have confidence in him. When he calls, they know that it is for

their own good, and not for his private and selfish purposes. Is this true of our leaders today? Are they more concerned about what happens to us, than about what they themselves can get? Are they concerned about our food, clothing and shelter? Will they lead us to the place where we can find these things?

Discussion Question 1

Why is it that we cannot respect our political leaders and often cannot trust them or be affectionately related to them?

b) The good shepherd cares only for one thing - that the sheep may have life, and life abundant (10:10). So he leads them out of the fold into new ventures of economic and cultural creativity. He himself goes before them as a pioneer (10:4). Do our leaders think constructively about how the lot of the poor is to be improved, how there can be more jobs and more production in the country?

Discussion Question 2

How can we get leaders in our country whose primary concern is not to stay in power, but to improve the lot of the poor and the needy? How do we change our system of education to produce such leaders?

c) The third more important quality of the leader (good shepherd) is that he does not run away when the wolf comes. He stands with the people and is not afraid of the wolf. He is prepared to lay down his life for the sheep, so that they may not be scattered in panic and torn up individually by the wolf.

A true cadre of leadership must consist of people who are not afraid of losing their wealth or prestige, who are not afraid of the oppressor and the powerful exploiter.

Discussion Question 3

How can we create in our students fearlessness, truthfulness, unselfishness, and the willingness to sacrifice everything for the sake of the common good?

Discussion Question 4

The question of leadership is a question of university education, largely. What sort of reforms would you like to see introduced in our present university system?

2

Who is My Neighbour

My Neighbour: How should I deal with her?

Exodus 20:13-17

1. The Ten Commandments reflect the moral perspective of more than 3000 years ago, when man is still in his infancy.

There are two versions - Exodus 20:2-17 is the Priestly narrative according to scholars while the other, i. e. Deuteronomy 5:6-21, comes from an earlier source according to them.

It is instructive to observe that the main difference between the two versions lies in the reason for the observance of the sabbath (Duet. 5:14 ff; Ex. 20:11).

Questions: What difference of attitude do you see behind these different reasons for the Sabbath?

II. Whatever scholar may say on the basis of whatever literary evidence they possess, as to the origin of the decalogue, its structure is very impressive.

a) Integral relation between what one owes to God and what one owes to neighbour.

b) the basic injunctions in the five latter commandments, positively interpreted, can guide us in our relations with our neighbour:

1. Murder - Mt. 21 ff - respect for personality & dignity of neighbour.
2. Adultery - Mt. 5:27 ff - mutual fidelity among human beings.
3. Stealing - Eph. 4:28 - handwork in order to serve others.
4. Lying - Mt. 5:33 ff.
5. Greed or lust - Col. 3:1-8 - the desire to use your neighbour is to

be replaced by a focussing on fulfilling his needs and caring for him, thus giving oneself to others.

The last commandment can also be understood as a critique of our consumer society, which whips up human greed or appetite in order to make him consume more.

Discussion question

How can you construct a relevant social and economic ethic on the basis of a positive interpretation of the latter five commandments?

My Neighbour

How to live with her?

Exodus 22:1-27

My relation with my neighbour cannot simply be a matter of cultivating the right attitudes in individuals. A minimum of social structure, formulated as laws and enforced, seems necessary to promote and enhance true neighbourliness.

The rules have some positive purposes

- a) education for all.
- b) corrective for the culprit.
- c) deterrent or preventive for many potential offenders.

But the trouble with laws and structures is that they deal only with external actions. Law cannot punish or deal with internal attitudes, which are at the root of evil actions.

The true inner attitude is to regard one's neighbour as one like oneself, and therefore to be as much concerned for his as one naturally is for oneself. This requires more than personal effort. Structures for "neighbourly living" call for justice, respect for the freedom and dignity of all, and the assurance of safety and security for all.

Question: 1. What are the main points of justice, dignity and security in this passage?

2. For what kind of people does the law show special consideration? (v. 21-27, see also 23:6, 9 etc.). That significance does this

have for our attitude towards racial minorities, immigrants, and the economically underprivileged neighbours in our own societies.

3. Why this great emphasis on trust and trustworthiness in these laws? (vv. 7-15). Does it have something to say to our asian societies?

The Neighbour and the Law of Love

Romans 13:8-10, Mtt. 5:17-48

The apostle Paul says that all the commandments of the Lord are fulfilled by obedience to the law of love. He picks up particularly the four last commandments from the persons one (See Romans 13:9), which are the ones directly related to our relations with our neighbour.

Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, went to the root of the problem in his reinterpretation of the law of Moses or the traditional understanding of the will of God. The Gospel demand is not merely for faith, but also for a righteousness that goes way beyond the limits set by the Pharisees (Mt. 5:20).

a) The murder prohibition is reinterpreted positively to mean respect for your neighbour and his God-given dignity (5:21-26).

b) The adultery prohibition is internalised the very desire to use another person for my pleasure is sinful. The ethic prescribed by Jesus here goes against the grain of our contemporary culture, which is very tired and wants to have a minimum of restrictions. Christ, instead of making the sexual ethic more permissive, gets at the root of the problem of our society, which breaks down our resistance to its persuasive marketing of all kinds unnecessary goods, by pandering to our lowest instincts and tempting us with the human figure as a “thing” to be “used” and “enjoyed.”

The divorce law in 5:31-32 is also exceedingly severe. But it would

be foolish to take it as a strict law to be literally enforced by compulsive authority. It is a demand for mutual fidelity irrespective of whether your neighbour (marriage partner) is convenient, pleasurable, or compatible for you.

c) The false oath law is also interiorised to demand the kind of person whose every word is truth, and who therefore has no need to swear that in this particular case he is not lying. The law of love involve also the dependability and integrity of a person (5:33-38).

d) The law of talons, or equal punishment for equal crime, is now transformed into a type of personality who has no need for revenge, for he is not threatened by anything. This is not weak non-resistance, but a tough strength which is so rare today. Gandhi and Kagava have exemplified this for us Asians.

e) Even the category of "enemy" where the law of love is not supposed to apply, is now abolished (5:43 ff).

Question: 1. What is the point of a love ethic that is so impractionable? Is it not much better to have a law ethic which is much more enforceable?

2. In a world where there is so much injustice, how can we love our enemies? What methods are justified for us in the struggle against evil?

3. How do we finally became people over whom the law has no power?

The Neighbour and the Life Beyond Death

1 John 3:1-24

John says again that the Christian Message is practically simple, “that we should love one another” (1 Jn. 3:11). Love of the brethren is the sign of life. Not to love is to remain in death (v. 14). But as in James, love must not be in word or speech, but in deed and in truth (v. 18).

Love is the source of prayer (21-22), and where there is love there is the spirit (v. 24). And love does not expect complete fulfilment in history, it always looks forward to his coming, when we shall see Christ as he is; one of the aspects of Christ as he is, is that he is in my neighbour and that my neighbour is in him.

The other aspect is that love has confidence, that even when it pours out its life in love, it does not die. we can give freely of our lives, because death has been overcome and has no power over us.

Love is the capacity to give of one’s own being without fear that one will lose one’s being (death).

Questions:

1. What is the relationship between love and death?
2. In what way does the Christian faith look beyond history - beyond personal history and the history of mankind for the final fulfilment?

3

The logos became flesh, and pitched his tent in our midst

John 1:14

God “became” flesh. This sounds shockingly absurd in the ears of a Jew. How can God “become” something, without ceasing to be what He always is? To “become” is to change. That is the fate of everything in creation, but not of the Creator himself - who is perfect “Being” and has no need of “becoming” something else. He is the One whose name is “I shall be what I am.”

But that is precisely what the Johannine text affirms - that “God became, flesh”, not that “God took flesh.” No one can say that God had need to change. No, He chose to enter the world of becoming, as a particular person in a particular time space milieu. This scandalous affirmation which is philosophically untenable is the heart of the Christian Gospel.

The modern man will say; “So what? What are the practical consequenceness? If the statement has no “cash value” or “use value”, I am not interested.”

We cannot exhaust its “use value” in any statement about it. But something we can say, as Christians.

1. If the Logos had not become flesh and thus part of Creation, this earth would probably have been wiped off the map of reality, or become like the planet Mars or Venus, without any life on it. For evil was so regnant in our planet, that the “natural laws” of God would have destroyed it; it could move a few thousand miles away from or closer to the Sun, or a Star could have come so close to our Sun as to destroy all the planets; God has many ways of disposing off a world of evil. But the Logos became flesh on this planet; our humanity is now his. So it will be not be totally destroyed. That is good news.

2. If the Logos had not become part of our sin - spoiled planet, I

would have had no hope at all that evil would finally be overcome; that the good will ultimately triumph; and that the two will be separated one from the other at the time of the "harvest" at the end of history. That is good news.

3. If the Logos had not become part of our history, I would find no ground for imagining that our history has either meaning or purpose. He became historical flesh. Our history now is his history. So it has hope and I can work with hope. That is good news.

4. If the Logos had not become flesh, I would have been a wevering and foundationless human being. He has now become the ground of my "being", so that my shifting, transient life now shares in His permanance. My sins are forgiven. I am accepted. That is good news.

4

Unity in the Spirit of the Lord

A paraphrase of Eph. 4:1-5:2

So I earnestly plead with you, as one who is imprisoned in and for Christ, that your life would be consonant with your calling. You should live in a humble and meek frame of mind, with greatness of spirit, upholding each other in mutual love.

And be zealous to preserve the unity in the Spirit, by preserving the mutual bond of peace and reconciliation.

The organism in which you now live is a single entity, one Body one Spirit. So also it is to a single common hope that you have all been called. The Lord whom you believed is One, the faith you confessed is one, the Baptism you all underwent is one. And now we stand in the presence of one God, the Father of all, who is above all, yet lives and operates in all.

But to each one of us has been given various gifts of grace, according to the measure that Christ assign to us: that is why the Scripture says:

“Ascending in to the highest he took away captivity itself and gave gifts to men.”

Now who is this who ascended, unless it is the same who descended, even to the lowest depths of the earth? It is the same one who has both descended and ascended far above all the heavenly realms, so that all these earthly and heavenly realms may be pervaded and filled by the same Person.

And it is the same Person who gave various gifts, to some to be Apostles, to others prophets, others evangelists and to yet others to be teachers and pastors, in order that these may equip all Christians with what is necessary for the tasks of service and for the building up of the Body of Christ. And what is the goal of all this? In order that all of us together may be established in the oneness of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, so that all of us together become one full-

grown and perfect man, that we grow in Christ to the limits of His fullness. In order that we may no longer be like little children in school who can be swept away and deceived by any teacher who is clever enough to delude them. There are men like that, crafty and deceitful, who delight in playing tricks on other men and misleading them.

We, on the other hand are to live in truth, open to each other without deceit, in love, so that we all together grow in to Him who is the head, even Christ, by whom the whole body is coordinated and mutually related amongst its various parts through the joints with which it is supplied; when the body is thus coordinated and functions in mutual harmony, then each part fulfills the functions assigned to it and the whole body builds itself up and grows in love.

So let me say this strongly and with conviction, as part of the teaching of the Lord, that your pattern of life should in no wise conform to the ways of the world, the value-system of the Gentiles. Their minds are empty. Their perception of reality has been darkened, because of their alienation from God. Their hearts have hardened, their outlook on life is without understanding. In a callous abandon, they dedicate their lives to brutish sensuality and licentious immorality.

But this was not what you were taught by Christ. For you have actually heard Him, and have been instructed by Him, haven't you?

For the Truth is in Jesus. Divest yourself of your former way of life - the old humanity which is subject to corruption due to the lusts which deceive; be renewed in your minds by the Spirit; put on the new vesture, the new humanity, which is created a new after that likeness of God Himself, that is in loving goodness and in the true piety of openness and truthfulness.

So divest yourself of falsehood and dishonesty and speak the truth each with his neighbour. For we are members of each other (in a single body). Get mad but do not let it lead to sin. Be sure that the bitterness is disposed of before sunset (before you go to sleep that day) otherwise you will be opening a door to the devil (to work on your subconscious mind).

Let the thief not only stop stealing but let him do some honest work with his hands, thus producing something which he can give to

his needy neighbour (rather than taking away the product of your neighbour's labour for your own need). Don't let any rotten talk come out of your mouth, but life-giving good words in season that edify and builds your neighbour up, that will bring grace and joy to your hearers. And do not offend the Holy Spirit of God by which you have been anointed and branded as his own for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and passion and anger and turbulence and blasphemy be cut out from you along with all former of evil. Become merciful to each other, charitably disposed, giving grace and joy to each other, even as God has given us His grace and joy.

So, be copies of God, as beloved children resemble their parents. And let love be the guiding principle of your conduct even as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a pleasing offering and sacrifice to God.

Jn:1:14-18: The evangelist has a definite aim before him in writing his gospel "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). If we read the signs, discourses and narratives in this gospel carefully we shall see that the main purpose of the writer is to show that in the human Jesus men are meeting God. Judgement upon us and all men lies on how we respond to this Jesus.

Read Jn. 1:1-13, Jn. 6:42, Jn. 18:37

To think over: How far is it necessary to uphold the faith that Christ was fully divine and fully human? How can we best introduce Christ to our Hindu friends who are well aware of the concept of avatara?

Jn. 20:24-29: The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a powerful declaration that he was truly God. The appearance of the risen Christ worked a great evolution in the lives of the disciples. It was the point from which their faith in the divinity of Christ grew. Note the change which the appearance of the risen Lord made in Thomas.

Read Jn. 10:15, 17-18, Phil. 2:9-11, 1 Pet. 1:3-6.

To think over: What are the implications of the word of Thomas "My Lord and My God"? In what sense do you believe that Christ will come as judge and redeemer?

5

Righteousness by Faith

Romans 3:21-26

One feels almost embarrassed in presenting kerygmatic truth to an academic community in which one is involved. For the very nature of an academic community requires non-kerygmatic submission of a thesis as one of many possible alternatives.

Yet I have no choice but to share with you, kerygmatically and apodictically the truth which has gripped me. I cannot be dispassionate or coolly argumentative when I share with you the very ground of my life. This is only an apologia for the dogmatic tone of an expository sermon.

I want you to enter into my experience and look at the classical doctrine of justification by faith as I understand it.

My primary thesis is that Justification, Sanctification and Glorification are three words denoting the same saving act of God in Jesus Christ. They are coterminous and co-incident, and not three stages of a process, or even three different processes occurring at the same time. They are one and the same process.

First of all, I want to submit to you that Righteousness, Holiness (Qadosh) and Glory (Kabod) are synonymous. Righteousness is conformity to the norm. There is no norm except the nature of God. Hence it is that Our Lord said, 'Why callest thou me good, for there is but one who is Good, even God!'. There is no absolute referent for the nature of the Good, except God. To be righteous is to have the nature of God.

Holiness is again a category which can be understood only in reference to the nature of God. I am holy, therefore be ye holy. Nothing becomes holy in creation except by being set apart for the one Holy God. Even the Church is Holy only because it is the temple of God and not because it is sinless.

Glory does not refer to praise. We cannot glorify God, because Glory is the nature of God. He can glorify us, but we cannot glorify him by imputing glory to him through our psalms of praise. The word Kabod refers to the intrinsic excellence of God's nature. He alone hath glory. The glory of any other creature, when it is not a reflection of his glory, is the great sin.

My second thesis is that man is created to reflectfully the nature of God. Apart from His transcendence, there is nothing in His Nature which is not to be given to man. The Wrath of God, The Love of God, The infinite goodness of God, The Power of God, in other words whatever attributes classical theology seeks to find in God, including His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, his love, glory, power, holiness, all this is given by God to man to be exercised by man on His behalf. But this nature of God, which is both his glory and his righteousness, is a full reality only when man stands in the relation of response to God. Sin has entered into the human race as a whole, both in humanity as such and in individual human beings, and has made this very response-relationship practically impossible. Man by turning away from God, reflects His wrath-aspect, which is nothingness and despair in our experience.

6

Righteousness & The Coming Kingdom

The announcements of the Kingdom by John the Baptist, by Christ Himself, and by the Apostles, have certain elements in common. All three saw the coming Kingdom in the context of certain prevailing expectations among the people of Israel, which have their roots in the Old Testament, but which took more precise shape and form in what we call the inter-Testamental period.

The most dominant of these ideas is that of the impending judgment. John the Baptist, after having announced “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”, goes on to say to the religious leaders of Israel:

“You brood of venomous vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits a return to righteousness (*theshubah*)... He who is coming after me has the winnowing fork in his hand, he will now sort out his threshing floor, gathering the wheat into the granary, the chaff being burnt with unquenchable fire.” (Mt. 3. 7, 8, 11, 12).

In Jesus’ teaching, especially immediately before his crucifixion, the theme of judgment comes to the centre. His upbraiding of the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Mt. 11:20ff.) has this clear eschatological reference: “I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you”. Many of his parables have a direct reference to the day of reckoning.

The apostolic kerygma was equally replete with the theme of the judgment day. Peter’s preaching, especially after his acceptance of the heart of the Gospel as including the Gentiles, testifies that Christ “is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10. 42). The early epistles of Paul are full of the theme of the last day.

Qumran documents

This theme of judgment has its background in the life of the Qumran communities, as well as in the apocalyptic expectations of the Jewish people in general. The Qumran documents and the apocalyptic literature agree in relating judgment to righteousness. It is common knowledge now that the Qumran Community' looked forward to the Teacher of Righteousness and the Day of Judgment. When Nicodemus acknowledges Jesus as a "teacher from God", he is identifying him as the "right teacher" expected by the Qumran people.

Of all the New Testament books, that which expresses the Qumran spirituality best is the epistle of St. James. It was a democratic socialistic community with an intense corporate discipline. It was not, however, an academic socialism, but one with a burning prophetic passion:

"Come on now, you plutocrats (rich people), weep and lament and howl for the retribution that is coming to you. Rotten is your money; your rich sumptuous clothing has become moth-eaten; your gold and silver have become corroded, and their corrosion will be incriminating evidence against you; it will eat up your flesh like fire. You have been hoarding unto the last day of judgment. The withheld wages of those who have-toiled on your fields of which you exploited them, will cry out against you and the cries of oppression of those who have harvested your fields for you have reached the laws of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived in pleasure and luxury on the earth, fattening yourselves at the slaughter of the poor. You have been quick to condemn and have not hesitated to kill the righteous man who protested: he was unable to stand up to you." (James 5. 1-6).

That is the kind of righteousness about which the Qumran Communities spoke, which John the Baptist preached, and which Jesus announced in his good tidings to the poor. When we individualize and interiorize and theologize this righteousness into a personal thing

which one receives as a free gift of God by some celestial book-keeping feat, we are taking away the true fervour of the faith which broke out of the desert and turned the world upside down. James the Righteous, as he was called, and the fiery John the Baptist are the symbols of the Qumran Community, the matrix of the Christian faith.

The Qumran Community, however, cannot be compared to any ordinary radical revolutionary party of our time. Their ability to combine the passion for social righteousness (the hunger and thirst for righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount is a typical Qumran attitude) with an equally intense discipline of personal and community worship characterized these communities of the Dead Sea.

Their passion for social righteousness was an integral part of their life of worship. They were exclusivistic of those outside their community. This aspect of their life we cannot emulate in our time. But the dialectic between the deep sense of participation in a "heavenly community" and the passionate thirst for righteousness renewing the face of the earth should provide a critique of many current attempts to choose between the two.

The element of social renewal of this world combined with a "mystic" sense of participation in the "other" world is illustrated in the following passages from the Dead Sea Scriptures:

(a) *The Hymn of the Initiants*. This was probably sung at the time of initiation of new members into the Qumran Community. The Manual of Discipline has this in the hymn at the end of the rules:

*The reliability of God is the rock on which I stand
His power is the staff of my right hand *
*My discernment has its source in his righteousness *
*His marvellous mysteries have kindled a light in my heart. *

*Mine eye has gazed on that which is eternal
Sound wisdom, knowledge hidden from men,
A discreet prudence hid from the sons of men,
A Source of righteousness and a reservoir of power
A spring of glory hidden from the Company of flesh*

These God has granted to his Chosen for eternal possession

An inheritance - a share in the heritage of the holy ones

*With the Sons of heaven he has merged their company
For a Council of unity, a Community, a holy building
An eternal planting, for all ages to come.*

(b) *"I will set a sober limit to all defending of faith and exacting of justice by force. I will bound God's righteousness by the measuring-line of occasion. I will temper justice with mercy, will show kindness to men downtrodden, bring firmness to fearful hearts, discernment to spirits that stray... 1*

(c) *"What is going to happen is, as it were, that all iniquity is going to be shut up in the womb and prevented from coming to birth. Wrong is going to depart before Right, as darkness departs before light. As smoke disappears and is no more, so will Wrong disappear for ever. But Right will be revealed like the sun. The world will rest on a sound foundation... The world will be filled with knowledge, and ignorance exist no more."* The Coming Doom.²

Man himself was regarded as a field for good and evil, not as sinful or righteous by nature.

"He (God) created man to have dominion of the world, and made for him two spirits, that he might walk by them until the appointed time of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and of error," says the Manual of Discipline.

It goes on to say that on the day of judgment, God will give the victory to the Sons of Light, who follow the Angel of Light and walk in his ways. The final day is when the Sons of Light challenge the Sons of Darkness to direct combat, led by the Teacher of Righteousness.

Teachings of Jesus

Jesus' own mission has to be understood in this context of challenging the Prince of Darkness in his own domain — the desert. The temptation narrative is the account of the first challenge to Belial or Beel-zebub. The casting out of demons in the Gospels has to be seen in this context of a war with the Angel of Darkness. The Cross is the temporary overcoming of the Teacher of Righteousness by the Prince of Darkness foretold (see Hymn J in the Hymn Scroll). The Resurrection is the final triumph of the Prince of Light who is given the victory by God.

The Synagogue declaration in Nazareth (Lk. 4. 16-21), which announced the Messianic task, and the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5, 6, 7) or on the level ground (Lk. 6. 17 ff.), are both to be understood as platform addresses of the Kingdom. It is good news to the poor because it is a manifesto of liberation from:

- (a) captivity and enslavement,
- (b) blindness and ignorance,
- (c) deliverance from oppression and exploitation,
- (d) acceptance before God.

Details of the Kingdom are worked out in Mt. 5-7 and Luke 6. 20 ff. You find again in Luke 6. 24 ff. the clarion call against injustice. The basic emphasis in both versions of the Sermon is on a life of righteousness — not forensic righteousness but real righteousness, 9Lk. 6. 43-49, Mt. 7. 15-27, a life founded on action, not just intellectual belief or heavenly accounting.

Even more impressive are the eschatological parables. Take three of them at random from Mt. 24-25:

- Mt. 24. 45-51 - The good servant and the wicked servant;
- Mt. 25. 14-30 - The talents;
- Mt. 25. 31-46 - The parable of the last judgment.

It has been somewhat disconcerting to my school theology to discover that the central criterion in none of these parables is whether

I accept the Lordship of Christ in a social sense or whether I accept Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. The Master is simply taken for granted. The way the servants behave is the criterion of judgment.

In the first parable, the good servant and the bad servant have both been entrusted with God's household (*oiketia autou*), to give them their sustenance in due season, to look after them and their feeding. Both are given authority and responsibility. The one uses his authority to fulfill his responsibility, the other uses it to exploit, oppress, and to live in luxury. The judgment here is definitely in terms of how the household was managed in favour of those who needed to be fed. Economics is the principle of judgment. Oikonomia is home management. The sins which bring judgment are mismanagement and oppression and exploitation. This can be applied to developed nations as well as to developing ones.

In the second, laziness, basic unwillingness to put to work what has been entrusted to the man with the one talent, is the sin that brings judgment. Developing nations are particularly answerable at this point.

In the third, it is the failure to care for the poor, the hungry, the naked, the sick, the enslaved, that brings the judgment of "everlasting punishment". And this judgment applies not just to Christians, but to all nations (Mt. 24. 45).

Writings of Apostles

The question that arises in the minds of many of us is: Do Paul and John see righteousness in this way? For them righteousness comes by faith and not by works. And they would not argue that righteousness is primarily socio-economic. They would regard it as the forgiveness of sins, of God's accepting us as righteous even when we are sinners.

It would appear that the question was posed very early, and is reflected already in the very first piece of New Testament writing we have, namely the Epistle of James. James the righteous, man of the desert, with knees calloused like a camel's from frequent kneeling in prayer, eyes glowing with the fire of a disciplined life of personal holiness and continuous prayer, yet passionately concerned for social

justice, could not understand the Hellenistic party in the early Church, of which Paul later became the leader, but which was probably led by Stephen the Proto-martyr.

“What is the use, brothers, of somebody who doesn't do anything saying he has faith? Can that faith save him? If a brother or a sister is in tatters and unable to get anything to eat every day, and one of you say to him ‘Good-bye, I wish you to be clothed and fed’, without giving him anything to wear or eat, what's the use? So faith, if it does not ensue in works, is just dead useless.” (James 2. 14-17).

St. James insists that the relation between faith and works is like body and spirit (2. 26).

Then what exactly did St. Paul and St. John teach? Let me first make two preliminary points about St. Paul.

(a) St. Paul had a radical conversion. He was a Jew from Tarsus, a strict Pharisee, for whom righteousness meant exactly the 613 works of the law. He was reacting against his Phariseism in all his polemic against “works” or “works of the law”; whereas St. James was no Pharisee. If anything, he was an Essene, and for him Christianity was something continuous with his Jewish faith derived from the desert communities. Christianity was only a fulfillment, not a reversal of his previous faith. He had made no right-about-face like St. Paul.

(b) Even St. Paul, when he speaks about Salvation by faith and not by works (Ephesians 2. 8 and 9), in the same breath also says, “We are created anew in Christ Jesus for good works”. There is no basic controversy between St. Paul and St. James. There may have been between James' and Stephen's parties.

But let us look now at the Johannine and Pauline notions of righteousness. Let us take St. John first. He is the mystic — apparently not concerned with social justice, many of us are likely to think. We shall here take the Fourth Gospel and the first Johannine epistles as coming essentially from the Apostle John, though critics may disagree with me here. The first epistle is plain:

“Don't let anybody mislead you, my children; He who practices righteousness is righteous, as Christ is righteous... By this test can be made evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the Devil. He who does not practice righteousness is not born of God; nor he who fails to love his brother... If anyone is rich in worldly goods and sees his brother in want, and yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love dwell in him? Children, don't let us love by nice words and kind speech, but let us show love in action and reality. For only then can we be sure that we are children of the truth, and we can have real reassurance in our own conscience.” (I John 3.7,10,17-19.)

The Fourth Gospel also clearly emphasizes the works of Jesus as revealing the work of God; He relates judgment (krisis) directly to works.

“This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, but men loved darkness more than light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices integrity comes to the light, that it may be evident that his deeds are done in God.” (John 3. 19-20.)

“My father continues working till now, and I must be working” (Jn. 5. 17). Jesus said in answer to certain Sabbatarian demands not to work. “We must work the works of him while it is day; night comes when no man can work” (Jn. 9.4). He said this as a prelude to opening the eyes of the blind.

John does say that the work of God is believing in Him whom God has sent (6.27 ff.), but he emphasizes his own works as the occasion for faith, and promises his disciples that they will do greater works than these (Jn. 5. 20 ff.). A man's works show whose son he is, God's or the devil's (Jn. 8. 41, 9. 3 if.). It is God who dwells in Christ who does the works (14. 10). And he can say at the end, in his High

Priestly prayer "The work thou hast given me, I have finished" (Jn. 17. 4). There is no doubt that John lays heavy stress on doing righteousness, and not simply on an attributed righteousness.

I must now deal quickly with the Pauline notion of righteousness and justification by faith. This can be done only in outline, and that too in brief.

(a) God's righteousness — God's wrath antinomy in Romans 1. 17 ff.; both are processes; parallel to Qumran doctrine of Angel of Light and Angel of Darkness.

(b) In the chapter on freedom from sin, i.e. Romans 5, the emphasis is on action: Yield your members as instruments of righteousness.

Freedom from sin means freedom to practice righteousness. Rom. 6. 16. The new life which the spirit brings is a life of righteousness. Rom. 8.10. Faith leads to righteousness. That is what is important for St. Paul. A new structure of law, however, cannot by itself ensure economic justice.

Social justice in our poor countries has been legislated, but cannot be enforced, because it is not grounded in faith yet. In western countries, national economic justice is gradually becoming accepted. A widening of the horizons of the imagination is what is necessary, so that we see the problem of justice in a universal context. "Born of God, you are in Christ Jesus, who has become your wisdom from God, righteousness and holiness, and liberation." (I Cor. 1. 30).

In summary, we have two false positions to guard against:

(a) the position that regards the question of justice within and among the nations as having nothing to do with the righteousness which God gives us in Christ.

(b) the position that social justice, both national and international, is the whole of the Biblical notion of righteousness.

One or other of these two false positions is still being adopted by the vast majority of Christians.

Meaning of development

The question now remains, what more than economic justice is actually included? When we ask for development, are we saying more than economic development? Or to put it differently, is economic development the central goal, to which developments in other areas such as health, education, science, technology and culture should be geared?

Here we have a double problem. In developing countries, everything depends on economic development, so that there is a temptation to gear other matters to this idea of economic development. Economic power is dynamic. Without it other developments are seriously impeded. Whereas in the developed countries economic development has already reached a point where attention can be diverted to other areas of development, the problem posed in these countries is of a different order of priorities.

The socialist countries of the world have begun to face this problem on the lines of Marxist thought — that the economic structure is the basic substructure that has to be built up as foundation for human development. If at one time, personal or individual freedom and freedom of the press were subordinated to the needs of the economy which alone could assure the freedom of the nations within which personal freedom could flourish, now that the economic structure has begun to be built, it is true, many Marxists are now saying, to give attention to some of the other questions about personal freedom and dignity. Among power, love and wisdom, power has often received primary consideration, and wisdom has been subordinated to the needs of power and not of the power-love combination. But power itself is indispensable to the dignity of man. Those who have economic power may find it difficult to understand the decision of some of the have-not nations to give economic power a higher priority than personal freedom and dignity.

The way forward

The following points need to have immediate attention in the Churches' own educational programme :

❑ The broadening of human consciousness to include all mankind. To think of this as our oikonomia (management) of the oikoumene (inhabited earth) for its oikodome (development). All nations have to be prepared to do this, do it together, knowing that “no nation is an island”, even those that are so geographically.

❑ The acceptance of the principle of dynamic pluralism. The basic issue of the apparent conflict between cultural identity, which is by nature local, and the nature of science and technology as essentially universal. We have to teach our people to understand and tolerate others who think differently, worship differently, and govern differently.

❑ This would mean — the co-ordination of all the power, love and wisdom of all nations for the welfare of the whole of mankind:

❑ Structure. - UN should receive more power. We are still, in the international field, at the stage where the capitalist statement: “The best government is the least government” is the prevailing idea. Legislature, judiciary and executive have all three to be developed for world-wide political and economic structures,

❑ The conscious attempt to shift the base of peace from wasteful over-armament to a democratically controlled central machinery of peace-keeping. Actual disarmament, and not simply non-proliferation, can begin to release economic resources for development,

❑ The special role of the two big powers who now arrogate to themselves the control of the world. The hybris of power is a real temptation to the big two, as well as to the up and coming big power constellations like Europe.

❑ An inclusive human society where none is excluded, on the grounds of religion, race, culture, political behaviour, etc. All nations from Switzerland to China and even the Vatican have to become part of this world structure.

❑ The urgent task of a middle technology geared to the needs of the developing nations with surplus of manpower, and the assurance of a market for their products. Western technology is unsuitable for developing nations. Western research must aid in the development of

a technology suited to manpower surplus economies.

❑ Greater assistance to the cultures of the economically non-dominant nations to develop a new synthesis of their own, in the light of modern knowledge - and a common search for a new doctrine of man which can be used as a criterion for evaluating western culture.

❑ A fresh understanding of the revolutionary stand of the have-not nations on the part of the have-nations. Law and order are subsidiary to justice.

❑ In this cultural pluralism, the role of religion should be fully restored. Transcendence can be maintained only at the cost of a measure of apparent irrelevance. Christianity must step off its exclusivistic arrogant stand and take the initiative in understanding the other religions, especially Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, all of which have great vitality but stand in need of renewal.

(The Ecumenical Review, Oct., 1967)

Each Child Has An Angel?

In any case, theirs is the Kingdom

Children *are* angels—at least many of them. But do they *have* angels? Does each child have an angel? Did Christ teach us so? In St. Mathew's Gospel (18:10) our Lord warned his disciples thus: "See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I assure you that their angels in heaven are constantly seeing the face of my Father in heaven."

The context was the dispute among the disciples as to who among them would be "number one" in the Kingdom of Christ. Christ's answer was to pick-up a child, put him in their midst, and to say to the disciples "if you do not turn around and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom" (St. Mathew 10:1-3).

But what did our Lord mean about "their angels beholding my father's face?" Whatever he meant, there are two or three things which are clear:

1. Christ puts himself on the side of the child, just as he puts himself on the side of the poor. But poverty is a state which can be remedied by the poor inheriting the Kingdom. Childhood, on the contrary, is the desired state—something which adults have to change into, in order to enter the Kingdom.

2. We make a big mistake when we think or teach that children cannot be saved, because they are not old enough to have faith. What an absurd idea it is to think that only adults will enter the Kingdom! Christ says exactly the opposite. "Allow the little children to come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of God." Mark 10: 14. Our Lord taught then that to children belongs the Kingdom; adults can enter only when they become like little children. Those groups who insist on adult baptism and teach against infant baptism are teaching something contrary to Christ and the Bible.

Yes, the Kingdom of God belongs to the poor, to the meek, to the

oppressed, but also to children. It is theirs by natural right, it seems. Children are important, not because of what they can become as adults, but as children. That is what our Lord taught.

Still, what did he mean about "their angels?" The obvious inference is that while children may not be consciously and articulately aware of God, their counter-parts in heaven do experience the presence of God continually. Each child has an "angelos" or a messenger or a 'counter-part' in heaven. When we become adults do we lose our angels because of our sins? I do not know the answer. But I know that children are important just as the poor are important- for theirs is the Kingdom.

If Christ has anything to do with who gets into the Kingdom, there will be lots of children, and lots of poor people (like Lazarus the beggar) there. And we better accept them both now, and do all we can for them. For Christians are members of Christ's body and share his mind, his will, his purpose.

Let us try to see how our schools distort our children, how our society teaches them evil ways, how we let them suffer malnutrition, poverty, and disease. Let us build a society where children are respected, loved and cared for. And that kind of society will not come about merely setting up a few Balbhawans or Balwadis. *It is* our sinful society that makes sinners out of these angel-like creatures. Let us strive to build a society where angelic children can grow up to be more than angelic human beings.

8

The Nature of the Church

Parables of the Kingdom

The following excerpts are taken from the first of three meditations given by Father Verghese at the 10th National Assembly of United Church Women, Kansas City, Missouri, October 5-9, 1964.

No single picture can express the task of the church in the world. Every parable and metaphor brings out a different aspect of the ministry of the laity.

Each of the seven parables (Matthew 13:18-51) has one or two points which seem relevant.

We must remember from the parable of the sower (Matthew 13: 1-25) that we cannot really expect all those who hear the word of God, even within the church, to be the good seed. This must be accepted. In the church itself are many people who fear the word of God, who believe it; yet because of the cares of the world, because of delight in riches, because of fear of persecution, because there is no root in their own being, the word of God does not bear fruit.

There will always be a small church within the whole which is truly the good seed, but even within that small group of people who are absolutely committed, different qualities of all humanity will creep in. Some will bear fruit, some 30 - fold, some 60 - fold, and 100 - fold.

We cannot expect the people of the church as a whole to be effective witnesses, effective shepherds who lay down their lives for the world. Within the church community will be a group of people who on behalf of their fellow citizens and brothers - but without any sense of being 'holier than thou', without any sense of self - congratulation, without any cliquishness - must develop and devise a program and work together and suffer together and serve together on behalf of the whole church. One thing to remember from the parable of the sower is that not all can bear fruit. Those given the special grace to bear fruit must not think themselves to be superior to

others who do not bear fruit in the church, but they must come together - they *must*.

The second parable we consider is the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24 - 30). It applies to history. Let us not think that the world will one day become a beautiful place where all men are united, where righteousness will flow like living springs, where there will be peace and justice.

No, the field of the world is a place where the wheat and the tares go together, and it will be so until the end of the age. It is inevitable that justice, as well as goodness, flourishes in the world. Evil will also flourish. The two will go side by side until the last day. Let us not be naive or optimistic. In history, the whole world should become a place where justice and peace and righteousness and love abide, but we must expect evil not only to flourish, but to be powerful, even sometimes to vanquish the good. Yet the good is not ultimately vanquished.

The tremendous courage of the Christian is that, even with failure as the only fruit of his labor, he is not frustrated because in his faith he knows failure is the means through which God brings out his glory. Therefore the people of the Christian community in each locality must have the courage to go and do that which is good, even when it does not seem effective. Even injustice and evil are able to suppress them, and sometimes, too, humiliate them. We must expect no less. We cannot work for social justice and be heroes at the same time. We must work, we must sacrifice, we must even fail in order that the glory of God may be revealed. That is the great lesson for us to learn from the seed parable of the wheat and the tares.

The third parable of the great lesson is that of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32). The church is sometimes charged with being irrelevant, small, insignificant, powerless, disorganized, disunited, but sometimes that is the calling of the church. The church is never allowed to triumph without at the same time being tempted to hypocrisy. Whenever the church becomes so relevant that everybody thanks God for the church, it is in greatest torment of temptation. The good kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed in size: taking the smallest of all seeds. Through that powerless and weak seed, God

brings to birth this tree, this object upon which the birds of the air can come to nest.

That is the way the gospels work, not in power and glory, and not limited to the ministry, but in the smallest and most insignificant of us. Whether the consequences will be known 100 years from now, we must work at our faith, knowing that in the calling of the Church not all will be the great saviors of the world in open glory.

Then the seven parables say to us that the Church will call all sorts of fish (Matthew 13:47-50). Sometimes it seems we have peculiar and queer fish in the Church. This particular net seems to have a special affinity to attract the queer and peculiar... Yet, this is the way the Church should be. The Church should not be a place where everybody is so good and so sweet and so lovely that everything is rosy. That is not the calling of the Church. The Church's hidden glory requires that a large number of people, like me, and like Him (I won't say all of you) *should* be different. We must not despise each other because we are queer and peculiar. We never know which one God chooses for his own purposes, but let us all remain in the faith.

Then, finally, the two other parables, five and six (Matthew 13:44 - 45). Both the treasure hidden in the field and in the pearl prove the same points. In a sense it is a little bit dishonest. It is not as if you discovered a treasure in somebody else's field. You go and cover it up, and then you go and buy it. It is a shrewd bit of business for the Lord. Our Lord was not talking about the effect of that.

When the layman or the laywoman is called to the ministry of the Christian, he says, "How much of my time will it take? I have too limited time. I have my bridge club, my golf club, my social work, and a few other things. I will serve the Church if it doesn't take much of my time." I compare it to a ministry.

The kingdom does not approve that kind of taking it lightly. The kingdom demands every bit, every ounce of our energy, every ounce of our time and our wealth and all our strength. It is not simply a giving of time to God, a part of our time toward Christian work. The kingdom demands nothing less than that you sell everything you have and buy this hidden treasure, that you sell all your little pearls and

trinkets and buy one pearl of great price. It is only that kind of commitment to the kingdom that can bear fruit, not one that gradually grants the Church a little bit of your free time.

The ministry to which we are all called requires the whole of our being, the whole of our time, everything that we have. Only when men and women all over the world are prepared to lay down their whole lives, their precious time, their influence, their power, their wealth, their minds, their knowledge, their professions, all that they have, only then will the Church genuinely begin to bear fruit and fulfill the ministry, the glorious ministry to which Christ has called us.

It is a ministry which may face failure and frustration. It is a ministry which will make us tired and torn. It is a ministry which will make us despised and rejected of men; that, knowing when we commit ourselves to him, who gave himself to us without reserve, then the glory, the hidden glory of the Lord, will begin to manifest itself in the world.

Prayer: Almighty God, who in thy mysterious wisdom has planted us in the field of this world, grant us faith that we may dedicate all that we are and all that we have that thy name may be made known better to the world through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

9

Life in the Spirit of God

Romans Chapter 8

I. Romans 8:1-13

Background

The eighth chapter of Romans is the centre of St. Paul's mature thinking. Here he gives us a glimpse of the mystery that was opened up to him by divine revelation.

The eighth chapter can be understood only in the light of the whole Epistle. It is the climax of an argument which St. Paul begins at 1:16 and concludes at 8:39.

For your own study, try to answer the following questions:

1. What are the two revelations in Romans 1:17 and 18? What is the relation between these two revelations?

2. God's wrath is manifested at all times, against all injustice and sin. Wherever men obscure the truth of God and walk in the way of personal or social sin, God's judgement is at work. Where today do you see personal and social sins most clearly expressed in our Asian situations?

3. What is the main problem of humanity as we see it in Romans 5:12-21? Can you locate the two main enemies of mankind in 5:12, which have entered into the cosmos as destructive forces? How are these two realities manifested in our Asian situation today? Death - through poverty, through war, through oppression; Sin - in man's inhumanity to man, in bribery and corruption, in blackmarketing, greed, lust, dishonesty, stealing: we see plenty of all this in our Asian countries. Are these not the two enemies destroying our people in Asia? Are they not the most frightening expressions of the wrath of God which is manifested from heaven?

4. What role does law play in resolving the problem of sin and

death? Can it resolve the problem? Why is law powerless? Or, rather, powerful only to increase the power of sin (5:20)? Can you think of Law as the social structures, as the state, and see why our governments seem to be impotent to save our peoples from the oppressive tyranny of Sin and Death?

5. If Sin, Law and Death are the three fundamental forms in which the wrath of God is revealed, what solutions are available? See Romans 6 about freedom from sin (see 6:18), Romans 7 about freedom from the Law (see especially 7:3-6), and finally Romans 8 about freedom from Sin, Law and Death, but especially from Death.

Text

Coming to chapter 8 itself, the first verse can be understood only in the light of the question posed in chapter 7:24, where Paul describes the basic dualism in which human action is caught. It is the same "myself" who mentally submits to the law of God and physically goes on disobeying the law of God by following the way of sin in the flesh.

This is our predicament both as Asian Christians and as Asian nations. We profess lofty principles, but practise despicable greed and lust and sin, both in our personal and social life. Our national plans speak about justice and care for the poor, but in our actual national practice there is injustice and exploitation of the poor.

St. Paul speaks in Romans 8 not in the national context but rather in a Christian personal context. It is the situation of each of us as Christians. With our minds we follow the way of Christ, in actual practice more often the way of the flesh. But St. Paul says that we should not get so worried about our personal sin and guilt as to feel that we will be condemned by God for it.

For those who believe in Christ, guilt has been removed and there is no condemnation.

Ask yourself the question:

Is it true to say that despite all my sin and evil, because of my faith in Christ, I am free from condemnation (8:1)? Can we also apply the

same principle of justification by faith to the life of nations? Can we say, for example, that because Christ is gracious and forgiving, there is to be no condemnation of our nation also? But the Scripture says that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, and it is explained in the same verse what it means to be in Christ - "to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Is it then merely a matter of faith, faith itself being regarded primarily as an act of mind and will, but not necessarily of praxis? St. Paul does not teach a doctrine of justification by an abstract faith divorced from works. Faith is a way of life - "walking in the way of the Spirit and not according to the ways of the flesh." This then is the criterion by which we have to evaluate both persons and societies.

Notes

1) The text of verse I is different in various old manuscripts. The fifth century Greek manuscript called Alexandrinus and some of the old Latin and Syriac manuscripts have "Now therefore (there is) no condemnation to (those) in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh," while most Greek manuscripts also add "but according to the Spirit." The Nestle Greek text prefers the shorter form ending with "Christ Jesus."

2) **walk** means way of life, manner of conducting oneself.

3) **according to the flesh** is a special Pauline expression with an ethical meaning. In some ways it is parallel to Freud's conception of the Id, the blind irrational impulsive force, which the ego has to bring under control of the spirit or mind. It could also mean life at the animal level, responding to biological urges and drives, but not freely controlling the actions of the body. Such life is undisciplined life, life not under sovereign control of the human spirit working in co-ordination with the divine spirit. It is thus life that leads to death.

4) **according to the Spirit** is also a special Pauline phrase, which means exactly the opposite of **according to the flesh**. To live according to the Spirit of God means to participate in God's life in the creation. This is what Christ does par excellence. We also live God's life in the world when we are incorporated into Christ and live by the

power of the Spirit in the Body of Christ. To live according to the Spirit thus means to live the life of Christ in the world.

The subject here in this eighth chapter is life and death, how to be liberated from death and how to attain to life. Both life and death are here presented as goals to be attained, not as present possessions. "According to the flesh" is the way of death. "According to the Spirit" is the way of life. It is possible to live the way of death (8:3a) or the way of life (8:13b). To be in Christ does not mean merely having faith, but living a particular way of life, characterized by the personality of Christ.

This has important consequences for Christian personal life, and for the common or structured life of a society.

Questions

a) Work out on a piece of paper, what in personal life means in actual practice to live the way of the flesh and the way of the Spirit.

b) Do the same thing for national and collective life for Asian nations and peoples.

II. Romans 8:14-39

A. Summary

In this section St. Paul deals with three different points:

1) To be a child of God is to have confidence - 8:14-17.

2) To be a child of God means to share both suffering and glory as Christ did. But glory remains a matter of hope. Here, too, the important thing is to be confident - 8:18-25.

3) God works with us in our weakness, strengthening us and turning everything to a good end - 8:26-30.

All these three points demand faith or confidence. But this is not an empty faith. It is based on the knowledge of what God has already done in Christ. Our confidence is that God is on our side and nothing is powerful enough to come between us and the love of God.

B. "Child of God" or "Son of God"

In Hebrew the word 'ben', 'Son', does not necessarily mean what it means in our languages. It could mean direct descent by parentage. But quite often it means participant in a collective entity like a family, nation or tribe. Thus *benai-Israel* (Gen. 42:5) means the sons of Israel, i.e. those who are participant members of the collective reality called Israel. *Benai-Yerushalem* mean Jerusalemites, i.e. those who participate in the community of Jerusalem. *Benai-Babel* means Babylonians (Ezek. 23:15, 17, 23). *Benai-ha-golah* means sons of the Exile (Ezra 6:19, 20). *Ben-hayil* means literally son of strength, but in fact means one who participates in the group characterized by the quality of strength, i.e. a strong man (see 1 Samuel 14:52, 18:17 etc.). Thus *Ben-adam* means Son of Adam, or one who is a member of the collective entity called Adam (2 Sam. 7:14). *Ben-elohim* means one who participates in the divine reality as it manifests itself in Christ, the true Son of God.

To be a member of the Body of Christ, and to be activated by the Spirit of God which animates Christ's body, is to be a son or daughter of God. The distinguishing mark of a child of God is that the Spirit of God guides all his actions (8:14). The hired servant, however much he may be paid, has no ultimate security. We are not hired servants of God. Our true destiny is as children of God, participating by grace in that great divine-human reality called Christ. We should have confidence in the love that has adopted us as children.

The cry "Abba, Father" was probably the original form of the first phrase of the Lord's Prayer, which in the early period was used extremely rarely and only in the solemn Eucharist, after all the unbaptized had been sent out. 'Abba' is the ordinary term of endearment used in the Hebrew home for the father, parallel to English Daddy or Papa. Those who were on such familiar terms with God need not be afraid that He would leave them in the lurch.

To be a child of God is to participate in the manifest presence of God in the world. This manifest presence is Christ as he is present in the world through us.

Are we Asian Christians truly the manifest presence of God in our Asian societies?

C. Suffering and Glory (8:18-25)

St. Paul makes no distinction between the way of the cross and the way of glory. The way of the Cross is the way of glory. "Now is the Son of Man glorified" - when the Cross looms large on the horizon (John 12:23).

The basic difference between middle-class forms of Christianity and the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is the juxtaposition of Cross and Resurrection, of suffering and glory. We Asian Christians have been pampered and spoiled. We do not want to suffer with our fellow-Asians, but set our eyes on the affluence of the west, and depend on their resources to run our churches. Until we who belong to the leadership of the churches can take up the cross of poverty, and want, we will not carry much conviction to our people.

St. Paul's ministry is one of suffering and joy in the midst of suffering (see, e.g., 2. Cor. 6:4-5, 6:9-10 etc.).

We should ask ourselves, what prevents Asian Christians from embracing a vocation to suffer on behalf of our fellowmen? In what way should we accept this vocation?

It is confidence about the glory to be revealed that gave St. Paul the willingness to endure suffering for Christ's sake (8:18). May be we have more confidence in the glory of a consumer society, of being praised by other people, and of having our names in newspapers.

The suffering, however, seems to be more than suffering. It is because Christ is still suffering, and we are participants in Christ's continued Cross-bearing which goes on till the end of history (see Colossians 1 :24).

But there is in fact a three-fold suffering and groaning:

- 1) The whole creation groans waiting for its redemption (8:22).
- 2) We, the Church, the first fruits of the Spirit, groan in suffering (8:23).

3) And the Spirit of God groans with wordless longings for the Kingdom of God to be freely accepted by human beings (8:26).

This three-fold groaning is the birth-pangs of something new to be born out of it, in part in history, in full in the transcendent realm beyond history.

Again we should ask ourselves, what is it that is waiting to be born? Is it the salvation of individuals alone? Or is the whole creation to be renewed, so that there is a new heaven and a new earth, where there is neither sin nor death, and hence no suffering? If this new creation breaks forth fully only beyond history, what is the meaning of history?

D. God working with us as the ground of our hope (8:26-30)

If the coming of the Kingdom or my own personal salvation were dependent on our human effort alone, then there would be no sure ground for hope. Even the Marxists do not believe that human effort by itself can achieve the classless society for which they are striving. They believe that it is the "force of history" that assures them of victory. This is a secularised version of the Jewish-Christian hope.

But God working with us and through us is effecting the achievement of his purpose. He could have achieved it without our co-operation. But he has chosen in freedom to enlist us human beings as his co-workers, and that is why the Spirit has to groan. The Eastern Fathers of the Church teach that God comes to our aid when we begin to exercise our will and begin the effort. If we sit idle, God will not work through us. It is only as we commit ourselves to the task and discipline ourselves for the effort that God comes to our aid.

St. Paul does not say that God helps those who help themselves. In 8:28 he says:

"For we know that, for those who love God, all things co-operate (or God co-operates in all things) for good, i.e. for those who are called according to His purpose."

When we are genuinely committed to God's purpose for the cre-

ation and set ourselves to work for that purpose, everything begins to fit in. This is God's doing. And in this is our hope, not in the effectiveness of our actions.

E. The Triumphant Hope (8:31-39)

When we look at our own sinfulness and feebleness we become despondent. We are worried that we may be punished for our crimes and failures; we are worried that everything will go from bad to worse. We surrender to fatalism and lose all hope.

But if God is with us, there is ground for a triumphant hope. Despite our failures, the Kingdom will come. Christ is risen. The power that broke the fetters of death and the tomb will also break the power of sin.

Sin may be universal, but it is not final. We should not commit the mistake of making a political theology based on the fact of sin alone. Sin must disappear; because nothing evil can be eternal. It is God's purpose that is the final reality. The realisation of that purpose is the "eschaton" - the "end." That end is already here, making itself manifest here and there in history. We should develop the sensitivity to discern it wherever it appears, and to know that this is what will ultimately triumph. Evil, even if it appears powerful and fascinatingly attractive, is doomed. We should not be intimidated or paralyzed by its apparent power.

If God be for us, who can be against us? Can colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, racialism, economic injustice, transnational corporations, the military - industrial complex - can any of these enemies withstand the power of God? If they are evil, they will be destroyed; and we must join the fight against them.

It is the love of Christ that is the ground of our hope. And it is a love that will not let us perish. Praise be to God.

10

God, Humanity and the World

I

Gen. 1:1-3, John 1:1-14, Gen. 3:1-7

Does scientific knowledge belong to the original light of the Logos that was in each human person? Or is it derived from the secondary experience of the knowledge of good and evil that came of eating the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden? That is our question. What kind of a thing is this science?

Among the ancient church fathers there was a general view that reason, or in Greek *logos*, is what makes humans participate in the light that was in the Logos of God. That is what the image of God means for many people.

No doubt both life and light are from Gods Logos. They cannot come from the serpent or from any other created being.

But then, God created light. The light was good. He gave that light to human beings with some restraint. Then a subsequent experience of humankind, a bold, audacious choice of humanity, brought us to where we are today. The original light combined with his bold, audacious choice of humanity. Well, the immediate result of that combination was a bit of confusion - fig leaf breech cloths Adam and Eve made themselves to cover up, rather unsuccessfully I suspect. Yahweh then gave them something better - skin garments. That is what we are wearing now, according to the ancient fathers.

I wonder if Adam killed the animals first to make those skin garments. But the Bible does not say so. Did Yahweh kill the animals?

I don't know. Anyway, where did the skin come from? Never mind. Don't ask too many questions. In any case, the garments of skin seem to have stuck. According to some of the best thinkers among our ancestors, we still carry around these garments of skin.

Gregory of Nyssa, my favorite, says that our mortal body is our garment of skin.

The original body that God gave us was obviously not quite like this one. Evidently it was a fairly grand thing, not bound by the force of gravity and not subject to dissolution, corruption, decay, or death. It could ascend into the atmosphere, as we saw in the ascension of Jesus. It could go beyond the veil of vision, which is the definition the ancients gave of heaven.

They do not think, at least the intelligent fathers do not think, that heaven is some kind of ceiling above which there is another floor. They define heaven as the limit of our sense perception. Beyond that is heaven. It could be right here but beyond the limit of our perception. Beyond that veil of vision Jesus, the incarnate human person, has gone. His is the kind of body that can enter through closed doors and thick walls.

Something that interests me even more is that the fathers said the body is capable of *eukinesis* - easy movement, movement by will. I wish I had *eukinesis* right now. Taking these garments of skin from India to Cyprus was a big job. If I had the original body I could have gone back and forth easily.

The body could suddenly appear with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Just as suddenly it could appear somewhere else. It could manifest itself where it willed. Its biggest privilege was to hover around the throne of God as the angels do.

Here the fathers introduce into the Christian tradition a very controversial doctrine: the doctrine of double creation. The present state of creation is the consequence of a double act. The first act is the original creation in which there is no presence of evil, but in which there is the freedom the serpent used. In the second creation, we got our garment of skin. And we now experience the limitations of this garment of skin, particularly subordination to the force of gravity.

Scientists tell me that gravity is a different kind of force from the other three: electromagnetism, weak force, and strong force. Gravity belongs to the nature of the cosmic curvature.

Gravity, of course, has its astronomical meaning, but as far as we human beings are concerned gravity is a consequence of the second creation. And that means that humanity can never be understood without reference to both creations. The first was the primordial beginning when God said, "Let light be," the creation that culminated in the emergence of the human. And the second creation occurred after humanity had used its freedom to disobey God, and God provided it with a temporary constitution of its body and of its sense, which are not necessarily part of its ultimate nature.

Although the second creation is the reality that we now experience, it is not primordial or final. We are expelled from the original primordial garden, wanderers on the face of the earth with knowledge of good and evil, cut off from the Tree of Life by the cherubim and the flaming sword, subject to sin and death, dust finally returning to dust. That is the second creation. But that is not the primordial nature of the human person.

Scientific knowledge - knowledge through modern science - shares in the ambiguity of this double creation. It comes from the breath of life and the light of consciousness with which humanity was endowed in the first creation. But it also shares in the character of the garments of skin and the expulsion from the garden where the Tree of Life stands, guarded by the fiery angel and the flaming sword. Human knowledge becomes ambiguous; the original light is clouded by the darkness of ignorance. Humanity can still seek for the original light that gave birth to the light in human consciousness. Humanity knows the good, the light of life, but is barred from access to it by the darkness of evil in it.

A Christian theological approach to scientific knowledge fails where it takes no account of this ambiguity inherent in our consciousness itself. It is the consciousness of a fallen humanity. But the original light, which is always good, is still there, though hidden by the darkness of evil.

And here an Eastern Orthodox theologian has to say a few words about the fall itself. We do not see in the teaching of the apostles any doctrine of total depravity. Nor do we have an expression for what

the Augustinian tradition calls "original sin." The nearest we come to it is the concept of *propatorikon hamartema*, the "sin of our forefathers," but not original sin. Our origin, including original creation and human birth, is not in sin. So we cannot speak of original sin. The fall does not make us totally evil. It is God who has made us these coats of skin and put us here, after the fall. The light still shines in the darkness; darkness has not overcome or put out the divine light in us.

We are fallen creatures, fallen from the original beatitude of our God-given inheritance. But we have not fallen into the abyss. We have fallen into the earth that God created and that is good. But it is a cursed earth. "Cursed is the earth because of you," God says to Adam. "In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3). The fall does not take away life and light. It only makes them ambiguous,, unstable, unreliable, distorted, obscured, unending. We are fallen from the garden of eternal delight, but we are not fallen out of the hands of God. We are deformed but not totally depraved. No one is righteous, but no one is totally evil either.

We go wrong if we think of science as simply belonging to the fallen world and, therefore, as evil in itself. Science too is ambiguous, not evil. Let us not forget the fact that modern science is born in a fallen *and* redeemed world. It partakes not only in our fallen-ness but also in our redemption in Christ. It is not without significance that science was born in a Christian milieu.

I am not interested in proving *The Religions Origins of Modern Science* with Eugene M. Klaaren and *The Origins of Science and the Science of Its Origin* with Father Stanley L. Jaki. What I am saying is that modern science arose in a world redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ. It arose in a Christian Europe, but that does not make it any more Christian than would be the case if it had been born in Africa or Asia.

Modern science has its roots in the original light with which humanity is endowed. That light is distorted by sin, but it is also redeemed by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. That would be a theological understanding of the nature of science.

Modern science, however, is incapable of answering some of the

very important questions raised by science itself. I have identified four clusters of such questions raised by science for which the answers have to be sought outside of science. Here is a brief outline of them:

1. Ethical issues produced by scientific developments

- a. Diagnosis by amniocentesis of genetic defects in an embryo in the womb. What action should follow?
- b. Peaceful use of nuclear energy. How much risk is justified after Windscale, Three Mile Island, and Chernobyl?
- c. Genetic engineering. What are the ethical norms to regulate it?

2. Science and socio-economic questions

- a. Who controls scientific-technological development and directs it to benefit a minority at the expense of the majority of humanity?
- b. Science/technology for war and profit to be liberated for service of the poor.
- c. Research and development concentrated in the developed countries.

3. Science and approach to reality

- a. If science is only one possible approach to reality, what is its relation to such other approaches as art, music, literature, religion?
- b. What are the roles of reason and faith in science, and in theology? How can they be reconciled, or integrated, or held in tension?
- c. What signs are there in science that point to the transcendent? What kind of truth does science reveal?

4. Science/technology and the shaping of humanity

- a. How does a scientific-technological and urban-industrial society shape human persons, societies, and institutional

patterns of human existence?

b. Does scientific training shape the human mind in a particular pattern of seeing reality which shuts out other aspects of reality? Is there distortion in scientific perception? In the attitudes of scientists and technologists towards other people?

These are some of the areas we need to keep in mind as we proceed.

II

Heb. 11:13, Rom. 1:18-22, 28-31

Faith (*or pistis*, basic trust) seems to be an essential element in both scientific understanding and religious understanding. In scientific understanding, however, the element of faith is often difficult to recognize.

Michael Polanyi points out two examples: (1) a fundamental faith in the effectiveness of the scientific method itself as a sure way to dependable knowledge, and (2) a trust in the work of previous scientists that the scientist accepts without empirically testing. Science itself cannot establish the scientific method by strict empirical proof according to its own criteria. This is the well-known definition or limitation of science.

The modern scientific enterprise is a community tradition based to a large extent on faith. By faith I mean trust in certain basic realities as dependable and reliable. This trust may be inspired by experience and by a particular interpretation of that experience. But it is not by any means dictated by unquestionable objective experience.

Here we must recognize the twin conclusions to which modern philosophers of science have come. Scientific affirmations or hypotheses are not without subjectivity, and they cannot be logically demonstrated or proved to be unqualifiably true. Objectivity and proof - the twin pillars on which science and scientism rested in the past - have effectively collapsed.

It is now recognized as irrefutable that all scientific theories are subjective - objective constructions of the human mind. Both in the construction of the theory itself and in the interpretation of the experimental results, an element of subjectivity is inescapable. No scientific theory is generated by experiments themselves. Theories are by definition subjective creations. They are tested by experiment and confirmed or discredited by experiment. Logically, however, the inductive method rests on the improvable assumptions (1) that if in one thousand cases B always follows A, then B is caused by A, and (2) that in the case following the thousandth, B will follow A.

Operationally we can use such a hypothesis with a major degree of success. But that does not mean that the hypothesis is logically proved. It is only an assumption that reality is consistent and rule-governed, that our expectations of reality based on experience will be confirmed by the future behavior of that reality. But that kind of faith is absolutely necessary for the advancement of science. Without that basic faith, the whole edifice of science would collapse.

We know from experience that false theories can still be confirmed by experience. The typical case is the fact that for centuries people accepted the Ptolemaic or geo-centric view of the universe because much of the data seemed to confirm it. As Thomas Kuhn has made clear, at certain points the cumulative tradition of science undergoes paradigmatic revolutions, the Copernican revolution and quantum physics being paradigm cases of such scientific revolutions. Generally cumulative and occasionally revolutionary, the scientific enterprise has grown up as a continuing tradition within a specific community of scientists with a credo that changes from epoch to epoch. The credo of the eighteenth century or nineteenth century would be different from the contemporary credo.

I am not a scientist, but I will give you my version of a contemporary scientist's credo. Scientists know better than I what they believe, but as an outsider to the community of science I will try to communicate how the credo of the scientific community comes through to me.

A Scientific Community's Credo

“In the beginning was the Big Bang. The Bang was self-generating, and it is no use asking about the cause of the Bang or what it is that banged. The Bang was in the beginning. All things, including time, space, and causality were made by the Bang, and without the Bang nothing that ever was or is today could come to be.

“In the Bang was life, including the life and consciousness of humans. In the beginning the Bang was chaotic and formless, particles careening about in time-space created by the whirl that followed the Bang. At that stage there was no Newton or Newtonian mechanics. Everything jumped quantum leaps to growing stages of excitement. Finally the whirl condensed into plasma and gas, liquids and solids, stellar systems and planetary systems.

“Then came geo-physics, the formation of the oceans, the continents, the atmosphere and ozone layers, the ionospheres and continental drifts. The universe had warmed up and Carnot's Second Law of Thermodynamics began to operate the things that had been warmed began giving off energy and moving from the wound-up state to one of dissolution or entropy, leading to the perfect equilibrium of death or zero entropy.

“Meanwhile another law had come into operation. The principle of that law, as well as the opposite law of thermodynamics, had been inherent already in the Big Bang. This was the law of life, which begins with the emergence of a self-replicating cell, a highly asymmetric protein molecule capable of growing to higher and higher degrees of complexity and centralized organization. This was negative entropy, the movement from a disorganized state to more and more organization. But finally entropy wins over negative entropy as organisms go into dissolution and die. The universe itself must die, because death is finally lord and king, until the next Big Bang comes.”

I notice that the scientific community never uses the expression, “I believe.” It seems to have difficulty acknowledging the place of belief within the scientific enterprise. But scientific assertions sound to me like statements of belief, interpretations of experience, convictions held in the community, of science. That was the impression I

got when reading Steven Weinberg's *The First Three Minutes*. I found no acknowledgment that the framework was largely a matter of belief - belief related to experimental facts, but still belief.

I am not ready to stand with Barbara Ward in making the claim that Christian theology is also a theoretical hypothesis that can be put to the test. She gave us a hypothetical formula for producing a Christian saint and challenged us to try it as a life-experiment and check if the predicted result, the formation of a Christian saint, would not follow.

I am arguing, instead, that the scientific enterprise is also a community tradition based on certain fundamental beliefs.

According to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is by faith that we understand certain things. For example, if there was a Big Bang at the beginning, the foundation of that Bang was in the word and will of God.

I prefer to see the creation in images other than the Big Bang. In the Christian community we believe that the big splurge of energy was an act of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition we say that it was an idea - will - word act. By this we mean that in the creative act of God, the conception of that which is to be created, the will that it should come into existence, and the word-act by which the creation comes into being occur in the same instant. In human acts there is an interval between conceiving something, willing it, and finally producing the effect. In the divine act there is no such interval. And therefore we will not say with Steven Weinberg that the first millionth of a second in the Big Bang cannot be explained but that everything that followed can be explained by science.

Instead we would say, along with the author of Hebrews (and not with Plato, who some people think is behind Hebrews), that the *hlepomenon*, the visible reality or reality open to our sense, is only a dimension of a larger unmanifest reality. We do not believe that the *hlepomenon* or *phainomenon* can be understood in itself without reference to the unmanifest *me-phainomenon* on which it is contingent and dependent. The faith of the scientific community, based on

its hope, is that the phenomenal universe is a self-contained and self-sustaining entity that can be understood in itself. This seems to me, faith for which there is no real ground. I would beseech Christian scientists to look at this faith, which seems to me a false faith and not at all necessary for the scientific enterprise. I wonder whether some competent Christian scientists would have the courage, knowledge, and wisdom to produce a paradigm that is less childish than that of the creationist school in North America. I ask, in ignorance, whether there is more than fear of ostracism from the scientific community that prevents Christian scientists from developing a paradigm of reality that takes into account our best real insights gained in the scientific enterprise.

The Moral Factor In These Assumptions

If the first chapter of Romans tells us anything, it is that humanity has enough evidence to acknowledge God, and if it ignores that evidence it is responsible for the moral consequences that follow.

The chapter also tells us that as a result of ignoring God, the heart (*kardia*), the center of the human personality, was darkened (*eskotisthe*) and has become unable to understand (*asunetos*). It is this moral clouding that breaks forth, not only in the personal and social sins that St. Paul has catalogued for us from the practices of the pagan society of his time, but also in the more frightening sins of war, nuclear peril, famine, exploitation, torture, misinformation, oppression, deforestation, and the upsetting of the eco-balance that sustains life.

We seem to be more sophisticated than ancient pagans. They knew God and yet ignored him, failing to give thanks (Romans 1:21). "Claiming to be wise, they became fools. They exchanged the glory of eternal God for images and idols shaped as mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" (1:23). Our images and idols are not of animals and reptiles, but of a self-existent Big Bang to which we do not have to give thanks and which we do not have to worship. We just go on banging everybody else, in imitation of our scientific god, banging nature, banging other people, and banging ourselves in the process.

I need not say more. You are intelligent persons. You can see what all of this means. The only thing I want to say is that we are *anapologetos* without an apology, without an excuse. We are responsible.

III

Heb. 2:5-18

These meditations are intended to provide an orientation to a Christian approach to the world, and to the science/technology that deals with the world.

I say world. I do not say nature. Nature in the sense of all that exists, whether inclusive or exclusive of humanity, is a pagan concept. It is not a biblical category. The Old Testament does not use the category of nature. Only in 2 Maccabees, the apocryphal book originating in a Hellenized milieu, is the word nature (*phusis* in the Greek Septuagint) used in this sense. And there it is a pagan, Antiochus Epiphanes, who in trying to force the Jewish high priest to eat pork, says to him that it is a delicious food provided by "nature." In the New Testament the word *phusis* is used to denote the God-given character of an entity, such as human nature. The New Testament does not speak of the world as nature.

Nature, as a pagan category, denotes that which exists by itself as opposed to culture, which is made by human beings.

Christians should beware of falling into the temptation of speaking about "God, man, and nature" or "dominion over nature." We should speak of the world, or of the created order, not of nature, as if it were a self-existent reality independent of humanity and God.

God, Humanity, and the World

These three realities are known in three different ways. The way we know God, humanity, and world are methodologically distinct. In knowing the world, subject-object thinking may be justified and perhaps inescapable. But we cannot use that kind of thinking in relation to our selves, or to other human selves, or to God. Even in knowing

the world we cannot be exclusively objective, but have to use subjective - objective thinking and understanding.

Modern science was born in a milieu in which the three entities - God, humanity, and world - were held together. But its later development has been in a framework that recognizes only two realities - the knowing subject and the known object. Descartes and Laplace laid the foundations for this dualistic thinking. Descartes spoke of *res cogitans*, the thinking thing, as subject and *res extensa*, the extended or space time world, as object Laplace dispensed with God as an unnecessary hypothesis for understanding reality through Science. Our whole modern culture is pervaded by this dualism of humanity as subject and "nature or external world" as object.

While modern science may have had its origin in a Christian framework, and in the Christian concept of a God - given and God - controlled, law-governed universe, the development of science has been spurred by the setting aside of Christianity's fundamental belief that both humanity and the world exist only in contingent dependence on God. If we overlook this fact, as many Christian historians of science do, we are likely to get into mistaken assessments of the scientific enterprise. This "secular" dualistic development of science is historically understandable, but we cannot afford to overlook its consequences out of some feigned respect for the scientific enterprise as such. This tendency to idolize science and stand in such awe of it as to prevent us from recognizing its true nature is, for a Christian, nothing short of blasphemy and idolatry. Until we recognize the idolatrous aspects of our attitude towards modern science, Christians cannot come to terms with it.

I know that what I have said is not acceptable to many of you in that form. I hope you can agree a little more if I say that "Christendom" is responsible for this secular dualistic development of science.

By Christendom, I mean essentially more than just the medieval church, which opposed the free development of science and against which the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had to revolt. I mean primarily the concept of *Christianitas* as developed by Charlemagne and his theologians as equivalent to the kingdom of God. As I read

the writings of Charlemagne's theologians he tries to say that Christendom or *Christianitas* is the concrete manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. That is what he wanted his Holy Roman Empire to be: the concrete manifestation of that city of God about which Augustine had written. These theologians had also the audacity to further falsify the truth by extending the equation to say: *Civitas dei* equals *Christianitas* equals *Romanitas*. The Holy Roman Empire of the non-Roman Franks was an expression of this false concept of a Christian world, a Christian empire, which was also a *renatio*, or rebirth, of the Christian Roman Empire of the fourth century, which had fallen to the Vandals.

It was this revised Christian Roman Empire of Charlemagne's Christendom that was identified with the kingdom of God on earth. It was the job of this Christendom not only to enforce God's will in the Holy Roman Empire, but also to expand it to the ends of the earth. The theologians and the clergy had the responsibility of interpreting the will of God from Scripture and tradition. The Holy Roman emperor or his state would then translate that will into civil laws and enforce obedience to them.

The importance of this development of *christianitas* for us here is its close association with *dominium terrae*, the domination of the earth. The interpretation of the Hebrews passage we have read refers primarily to the domination of the whole earth and bringing it into submission to the will of God. In the Christendom of Charlemagne, however, the emphasis was not on dominating the earth through science and technology but on a state-centered domination, a political economy controlled by the clergy and the feudal barons, theoretically expanding territorially to cover the whole earth and bringing it into obedience to the will of God by conversion or forced obedience. Charlemagne's Christendom developed only the idea of a Christian state - and - clergy controlled *dominium terrae*, stretching to the ends of the earth.

Charlemagne's Christendom remained a puny little affair in a corner of western Europe. It could not spread even to cover Spain or Italy or Britain or most of the Scandinavian countries, not to mention

the Byzantine Empire, the rival Christendom flourishing to the East. Neither could it expand to the Islamic Caliphate of *Ispahan* (Spain). This little Christendom lacked the power to bring the two rivals, Eastern or Byzantine Christianity and Southern Islamic Spain, into submission. But it developed the desire to do so, along with the Christian justification for so expanding, and the hostility towards Eastern Christianity and Islam that came to clearer expression in the Crusades.

We cannot here deal even cursorily with the historical development of the idea of Christendom, which was identified with *Romanitas* and was later taken over by the Bishop of Rome as king of the kings and bishop of the earth, as the direct representative of Christ on earth. He took over the responsibility of enforcing the *dominium terrae* not only in Europe but also over the whole earth through the kings of Portugal and Spain. The Caliphate of Ispahan foolishly declared its independence from the Caliphate of the Abbasids and became a victim of Christian Europe. Christian Portugal and Christian Spain received the commission from the Pope to bring the whole earth under obedience to the will of God, obedience to Christ and to his vicar on earth, the Roman pope.

Africa, Asia, Latin America, and North America, which had existed as human societies for thousands of years, were suddenly "discovered." Trade, plunder, and slavery were now possible as ways of *dominium terrae*. Christendom expanded through trade, piracy, and colonial conquest.

It is in that ground that modern science has its roots. Historians of science usually ignore the double spur that early European science received from the needs of expanding the trade routes and the process of colonization, and from the material resources plundered or acquired by trade from the rest of the world. *The dominium terrae* concept was originally understood in terms of political economy, and only later in terms of science and technology. It did not develop in a Christian Europe isolated from the rest of the world, but in a Christian Europe in constant interaction with the rest of the world. It was spurred by that interaction into developing modern science and technology.

Tomorrow we must look at the more positive aspects of science and technology in the functioning of humanity between the two poles of God and the world. But today I want only to warn Christians against any idolatry of science that replaces the idolatry of "nature." Such idolatry will inhibit us from a free and honest assessment of science / technology as a gift from God.

IV

Psalm 144

Our Bible meditation continues on the theme "God, Humanity, and the World." We focus again on the question, What is humanity? What is man/woman? This question is raised in those terms at least four times in the Bible.

The first to have raised it seems to have been Job. So let me translate a passage from Job 7.

"Has not man a hard service upon earth? Are not his days like the days of a slave? My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt. My skin is hardened and breaks out afresh. Remember that my life is a breath, but I will not restrain my mouth. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. "Am I the sea, or a sea monster, that you set a guard over me? When I say my bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaints, then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions. So much so that I would rather be strangled to death. I loathe my life. I don't want to live. Let me alone for my days are a breath. What is man that you make so much of him? And you set your mind on him. You visit him every morning. You test him every moment."

Those questions raised by Job have been raised in Hebrews 2:6-8 and by the psalmist in two other contexts. If we take these different contexts in which the question, What is humanity? has been asked, we get some interesting contrasts.

In Job it is a cry of anguish: "Why do I have to suffer this kind of life, why do I have to be afflicted like this, why can't I be left alone?" This is the complaint to God. But Despair, combined with trust.

That is one way of asking the question, What is humanity? Why do you make people suffer so much? Why do we have to go through Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why do we have to go through concentration camps and holocausts? Why do we have to go through Vietnams? Why do we have to go through the 1947 riots in India and Pakistan, which killed hundreds of thousands of people?

It is a good question to ask along with Job. Sixty percent of the world's people still do not have enough to eat, or a place to sleep, or enough clothing. Why? What is humanity? That is one context in which we can ask that question.

The second context, from Psalm 8, is different. There you have, "Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth! Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted by the mouth of babes and infants. When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast set up, what is man that thou art mindful of him and the son of man that thou carest for him?"

It is in contrast to the glory of God that you ask the question, What is humanity?

Then the psalmist goes on to say, "Yet, thou hast made him a little less than God and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the work of thy hand. Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!"

That is an interesting context. On the one hand, there is this great, majestic, glorious God. In comparison, what is humanity? On the other hand, compared to the rest of creation, everything has been put under humanity. So humankind is crowned with glory and honor. It is a dialectic approach in Psalm 8.

In Psalm 144 we find another kind of contrast. Here God is a rock, a fortress, a stronghold; and here humans are just a breath, a passing shadow. Our impermanence is compared with the dependability and reliability of God. And in that context the question arises

again, what is man that thou art mindful of him?

The fourth context is in Hebrews 2:5-8, which repeats the Psalm 8 contrast but puts a new twist on it. In Psalm 8 you have the glory of God compared to which man is nothing and the world compared to which man is pretty high, crowned with glory and honor. The same thing is in Hebrews, but with a new turn. Everything is not yet subjected to man. That everything should be subjected to him is his vocation. But what you see is Jesus, the only man to whom everything has been subjected. The people who are to share in Jesus have not yet got there. So the *dominium terrae* remains a vocation yet to be achieved. In fact, humanity itself remains a vocation to be achieved. Here are four passages in which the Old Testament and the New Testament have asked this question, What is humanity? in the same words more or less. It must have been a frequent question in these cultures.

There is, however, another passage that has taken the central place in the Augustinian doctrine of man. It is in Psalm 51:5. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." That was the central text for Augustine to understand man. He made a dreadful exegesis of it. "In sin did my mother conceive me" meant to him that the act of conception is a sin. Augustine said that without *concupiscentia* nobody can be born. That no human being can be born without lust was Augustine's affirmation. He believed that this lust, which leads to conception, is somehow that which determines human nature. Thus humans are sinful because they are born out of an act of *concupiscentia*.

Actually Augustine said that only in a sermon. He didn't make it so central. But other people later made it central, and made a mess of it. If you take Psalm 51:5 literally ("Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity") even giving birth is a sin. The mother is sinning. Unfortunately this passage in Psalm 51 became decisive for Western Christian anthropology.

We must come back to those four passages with which we have been confronted and try to find a way of understanding what humanity is.

Perhaps the best thing for me to do now is to refer to three concepts developed in the ancient Christian tradition apart from Augustine.

One is that humanity is a microcosm. What is implied is that everything that is in the cosmos is already in the human person. A prevailing pagan idea was that man is made of the same elements as the earth and the cosmos. Therefore, in man the cosmos is embodied.

My favorite father, Gregory of Nyssa, didn't like this microcosmos idea. He fought one half of it by bringing a very eloquent image. He said, "You say man contains all of the elements of the earth. Wonderful. But so does a cockroach. So, is a cockroach a microcosm also? "You go wrong," he said, "in too easily going into the idea of microcosmos. That is not what defines humanity. But there is another way in which man is a microcosmos, and that we should take seriously. The same creative *energeia* of God that created matter and worked in that matter to bring forth plant life and then animal life also finally brought forth human beings." A very minor idea of evolution in an unscientific early form is already in Nyssa.

Nyssa takes the definitions of matter from Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics and refutes each of them. Then he asks, "What then is matter?" His answer is that matter is *energeia theou*. It is the energy of God - a very powerful modern idea.

If Gregory of Nyssa were a Platonist he would say that matter is formless, useless, void, meaningless, non-being. But that is not what he said. He said that matter is the energy of God - the energy of God in motion, in dynamic development that culminated finally in plant life, animal life, and human life.

Then he goes on to say something that is again fascinating. He said that the human being embodies not just all the elements of the dust but the three previous stages through which humankind has come. A human being is a microcosm in the sense of embodying the material, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms within him or herself.

But that still is not Gregory's final definition. His definition springs from the vocation that man has received through being created after

the image of God. You are not yet the image of God, he said. Only Jesus is the image of God. But that is the direction in which you must develop as the image of God.

He refuted the idea that the image of God is in the intellect or in reason. This very common Western idea is in Augustine himself. The idea is that intellectual reason, which separates us from the animals, makes us in the image of God. That is not Gregory's idea. He says the image of God is in both the soul and the body of the human, and he goes into a beautiful chapter about where the mind is located in the body. He says that the mind is located in the whole body of a person, a very modern idea. The brain, he says, has a certain specialized function of sorting out information, but information gathering is done by all parts of the body. And the body itself knows. It is not just the head that knows.

He has the idea that the creation of humanity did not consist of creating the soul first and then putting it into a body. The body and soul were born together and grow together. For him, therefore, the image of God does not mean just the invisible. He will not accept the argument that because God is invisible, that which is invisible in us, the mind, must be the image of God. He says something that at first shocks. He says the body is also made in the image of God. That sounds like anthropomorphism, as if God has hands and legs and feet and eyes. That is not what he means.

He says: Look at humans. What is the most distinctive thing about them? How are they different from the animals? The difference is not just in the head, because animals also have brains. But the animal has to carry its body in a horizontal position. And the four feet support this body and the head, which is always bowing towards the earth.

Gregory says ones human beings were able to stand on two feet, all kinds of changes took place. No longer were the arms used to support the body, but they are in the service of the brain. And the hand and the brain together know:

It is a modern concept again. The hand and the brain together know things, not just the brain alone. In modern thinking, as you know,

theory and praxis are dialectically related to each other. It is out of the handling of material stuff that a human being grows up to be a human being.

Gregory says that once the head is lifted up the person doesn't have constantly to use his nose to look for food. Once his hands are free his tongue is free from the need to pick up food. He can develop language. And by this combination of brain, language, and hands a human being becomes the image of God. So in the body itself the image of God is reflected.

But what then is the image of God? Is it the body? No. Gregory defines the image of God in a very simple way, a definition that has been regarded as semi-Pelagian in the West but that I find most acceptable. He says God is good; therefore, the character of the image is to be good. The image of God is to be good like God. Good means to have power, wisdom, and love. And when these things are embodied and made real in this humanity, then humanity comes into the image of God.

I want to say at this point that this business of the use of the hand and the handling of matter is an essential aspect of growing into the image of God. So it is significant that using the brain and handling matter are what science and technology mean to people. Separating science and technology does not work because there is no modern technology without modern science, and modern science cannot do research without technology. You take something, understand how it works, and then make it work according to human purposes. That is science and technology. Science tells you how things work. Once you know that, technology can tell us how to work on things so that they work for us. Understanding how things, plants, animals, planets, whatever they are, work is science. And then you use that knowledge to make them work according to your human purposes. That is technology.

So this *stoff-wechsel*, this handling of matter, this metabolism and transforming of matter, this humanization of nature, is the process by which we become human beings. That is a very subtle concept. It is not simply that we become an image of God but it is the process of

menschwerden, the process that Hegel talked about, by which one becomes a human being. I understand that that word in German is the same word as “incarnation” or “man becoming.” Humankind is becoming through the *stoff-wechsel* or metabolism or material exchange of science/technology. So science/technology plays a major role in shaping the image of God in humankind. That is why you can't put it outside the concern of religion. You can't say that it is somebody else's business to look after science while we look after souls. Science/technology is a part of the means by which *meusch wurdung*, becoming a human being, takes place. Therefore we must have a positive understanding of science/technology.

In spite of my warning against the idolatry of science and technology, I want to say that science and technology have a central significance in human becoming. Incarnation is human becoming. Incarnation is God in humanity becoming humanity. And in that process there is a central role for science and technology. So when I speak about *theosis* or deification, I have in mind that we take this whole nature, which has been given to us, and let the whole of it bear the name of God. “Nature” or world - with - humanity becomes a manifestation of the good. It becomes a manifestation of love, power, and wisdom. That is why science and technology are central to a Christian anthropology, to the understanding of human deification.

Deification is not that we human beings somehow become exactly like God. It is that we who embody the whole creation and are the priests of creation take the created order and shape it to show forth the glory of God. That is the vocation of humanity.

I shall continue this discussion tomorrow when I speak about humanity as the frontier being.

V

Gal. 4:1-7, Gal. 4:31-51, 1 Peter 5:8-9

Galatians 4:1-7: “I say, therefore, as long as the heir of a family is a child there is no virtual difference between him and his slave. The heir is, of course, lord of all, owner of all, yet he is put under tutelage

of guardians and trustees until the time set for him by the father. The same is true of us as human beings. As long as we are children we are governed, enslaved by the elements of the world. But when the fullness of time comes, when maturity arrives, God sends his Son, born of a woman. Born subject to the limitations of law in order that he might buy out those who were under the law so that we may receive full adoption as children. And because we are now mature children of God, God has also sent forth the Spirit of his Son into the deepest recesses of our personal and social existence. So we cry out, *Abba*, Daddy, Father, because we are no longer slaves, but children. And if children, then we are heirs of God.”

Galatians 4:31-51: “So, brothers and sisters, we are not children to be guarded by nurses, but we are children of freedom, children of the free woman. It is for this freedom that Christ has freed us. Therefore, stand fast in that freedom. Do not let yourselves be put again under the yoke of slavery.”

1 Peter 5:8-9: “Be alert, watchful. Our enemy is prowling around like a hungry lion seeking prey to devour. Stand up to him, strengthened by faith. Do not be put down by your sufferings. Such suffering is the prescribed lot of the brotherhood throughout the world.”

I want to speak about three aspects of the relation between God, humanity, and the world.

First, I want to talk about humanity as a frontier being. This is a central concept in patristics, humanity as a *methorios* being. *Methorios* does not mean frontier as the farthest limit. The frontier between two entities, the common area between the two, is the meaning of *methorios* as frontier.

The *methorios* participates in the reality on both sides of it. If you draw a line between two realities, it is a frontier. But that line participates in the realities on both sides. So what we mean by saying humanity is a frontier being is that humanity stands between the Creator and the creation as one who participates in both - in Creator and in creation.

Humankind is the breath of God. But humankind is also the dust

of the earth. So it is not sufficient to have an inclusive view of nature in which you somehow put humanity inside nature. You must put humanity inside God too.

An inclusive view of God will be necessary if you take the frontier notion seriously. This view may be difficult because we have tried to turn the frontier into a gap between Creator and creation. But we who stand here in the gap are to be included, so to speak, in both. That is what is meant by our deification. It is participation in God. 2 Peter 1:4 clearly says we are called to participate in God's nature. That is what I mean by frontier being, this participation in both God and world.

The great temptation, on the one hand, is to forget God and become active in the world, solving the problems of the world by our activism. That is one temptation. When the activism doesn't work, however, we are tempted to go to the other end away from activism into contemplation, meditation, Eastern religions, all that. Our temptation is either to be simply activist in a secular world, trying to find fulfillment and solutions to problems through that, or to retreat, when that doesn't work, into a kind of internal world of contemplation and Eastern spirituality that is unrelated to the problems of society.

Neither extreme is permitted for us. We have to remain at the frontier between the two. It is our job to bring the creation to God, to speak to God in worship as the representative of creation, and more difficult, to bring the person of God into creation so that the immanence of God is manifested through the human presence in the creation. A frontier being is one who lifts up the creation and speaks as the mouthpiece of creation in worship and one who brings the Creator inside the creation through his or her presence. This is the frontier existence of humanity.

There is another frontier in which the same choice is not given to one. That is the frontier between good and evil.

Any doctrine that assumes humans are intrinsically good or intrinsically evil will not do. Both must be recognized. Humankind is on the frontier, participating in both good and evil. But there its struggle is not to reconcile the two. It is to bring the good inside the evil, suffer-

ing and dying if necessary, but in that process redeeming that which is evil from evil.

That this frontier existence is part of our freedom is a point I want to clarify. Augustine speaks about *liberatas maior* and *libertas minor*; the major freedom and the minor freedom. The major freedom is the freedom to choose between good and evil. The minor freedom is the freedom to choose between different kinds of good. Minor freedom is within the good, choosing between different goods. And the other freedom, choosing between good and evil, is the *libertas maior*. In his prayers Augustine says, "I don't want this major freedom. Keep me within the minor freedom. Keep me inside the good so that I will have only this freedom. I don't want that, big freedom."

The Eastern fathers would not accept that. They said you must face the first freedom all the time. You must stand on this frontier between good and evil. You cannot expect now to be freed from this struggle between good and evil to which you are called. It is in that context that your freedom will develop. To develop freedom you have to go right into the heart of that reality where the struggle between good and evil is going on, bringing about the victory of the good by suffering, by death, by love that gives of itself.

I want to say one more thing about humanity (I'm glad it is now regarded as sexist to use the word *man* and that we are forced to use the word *humanity*, for the word *humanity* helps us to see that we are not talking about individuals. Humanity is one corporate reality). Gregory of Nyssa, in an exegesis which is questionable, says that the one lost sheep for which the shepherd left the ninety-nine is not an individual sheep. All of humanity is a lost sheep. So the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine - the angels and everybody else there - and comes looking for the lost sheep, which is the whole of humanity. Of course, in the biblical context the exegesis is a bit difficult. But that is the freedom of patristic exegesis.

This interpretation has some implications that are worth noting. Our idea, and I heard it long ago from my good friend Billy Graham, is that the only way to solve the problems of the world is to make everybody Christian. He has changed his point of view since then.

But when it was my privilege in 1953 to introduce him to a gathering at Princeton, that is what he said to me. You make everybody Christian and then everything will be all right. I told him that I find that people who are Christians also create many problems.

We have to come to a new understanding of the relation between the church and the whole of humanity. We cannot bring the whole of humanity into the church. History makes that very clear. Humanity must exist along with the church. The church must not be concerned only about its own salvation. It must constantly seek the salvation of the world by its presence in the world, by leavening the whole of humanity. Christ died for the whole of humanity and not for the church alone.

Recently it was my privilege to chair a conference on global issues in which one of the speakers was Ivan Frolov, the president of the Institute of Philosophy in the Soviet Union and an advisor of Gorbachev. He said one of the ideas now current among Russians is that they have become convinced that they cannot wait until everybody becomes Communist to solve the problems of the world. That is what Christians also ought to say. We cannot wait until everybody becomes Christian to solve the problems of the world.

They are saying that as a Communist party they must now live with other people who are not Communist and who are opposed to Communism and must work with them. Probably we have to say the same thing. We as Christians have to work with people who are not only not Christian but are opposed to Christianity. This includes Muslims, Buddhists, and Communists.

So when I talk about the freedom of humanity and the frontier beingness of humanity I am not talking only about the church (I am talking about the whole of humanity within which the church is an essential element, as its conscience, as its worshipping element. The church derives its significance by living with and for humanity as a whole.

My second point is about the nature of freedom. I don't want to go into all the foundational discussions about freedom from, freedom for. The freedom of God is both from and for. In one piece. Rather I

want to say that freedom is freedom from internal and external constraints to create that which is good. Both this freedom from constraints and creation of the good are integral to freedom. One doesn't exist without the other. We have to be liberated from both internal and external constraints *in order to create the good*. And creating the good, not liberation from constraints, is probably the more important part of freedom.

Liberation Is a Means to Creative Freedom

The misunderstanding of freedom is that it is only liberation from constraint, so that one is free to do what one wants. Freedom has made you free, but do not use freedom as a platform for evil. Freedom is for doing good. Freedom is the creativity of the good.

Keeping those double aspects of freedom in mind will help you to understand when I say God is freedom. He is free from internal and external constraints, free to create that which is good. Good that does not come out of freedom, according to Gregory of Nyssa again, is not real good. The good of a beautiful flower is not the kind of good we have to produce. It is a good coming out of freedom. It is a good coming out of will. The connection of freedom to the will is very important. The will must be liberated from all bondage to external and internal constraints in order to will and do the good.

Now I want to say that freedom is built into the creation. When God brings the creation into being, it is already endowed with freedom. It is that freedom that we now begin to see at the most micro-level of matter and energy. Total predictability is not there. There seems to be an element of freedom in the behavior of the wave-particle, of the electron, of the minutest particles.

This same freedom grows and develops finally in human consciousness, which is probably the most sophisticated entity of which we have any awareness (If you want to locate it in the brain, go ahead. The brain itself is the most highly evolved, complex organism that we know). It is the same freedom that is in the micro-level that has in the grace of God broken out into human consciousness.

This continuity of freedom within the created order is becoming

part of the new understanding of science. Even in biological evolution they say the evolutionary process made some important choices millions of years ago, such that if the choices had gone the other way, consciousness would not have emerged. That is what George Wald, biologist and Nobel Prize winner and once professor of biology at Harvard, tells me. He says the world has been built and guided in such a way that consciousness must emerge at the end. The choices that now permit the emergence of consciousness had already been made by evolution millions of years ago.

This element of freedom and consciousness that is present in the whole of creation comes to its full flower in humanity. It is humanity that is the consciousness of the creation. The creation responds to God through humanity and the creation has now the possibility of being guided by this consciousness, which has emerged in human-kind as the brain of the cosmos.

This human consciousness, however, is in bondage to evil and has to be rescued from that bondage. Freedom has resulted in evil, by choice. Freedom grows by the struggle against evil. Creation has to be rescued from the bondage of that evil and be made free again to do what it was intended to do. That is what Christ has done. That is what the Spirit of Christ, which he has sent to us as we become mature, is enabling us to do.

Let me take the third problem, which is the problem of evil. Evil is pre-human but not pre-creation. The serpent was created and was in the garden before human beings got into trouble. So it is pre-human. Before humans fell into evil, evil had already existed in the creation. Evil comes out of the freedom of the created being.

Evil is not an impersonal force. If you say the Devil is only a force. I can't accept it because this force is very cunning. And cunningness is not possible for a force. A force will have to be straight-forward. The Devil is always deceitful, cunning, sly. You know how he can get inside us, inside the church. He has had much success because he has concentrated for some time on the church. As soon as we are no longer a threat to him, he leaves us alone. We are already caught. He is very sly, very intelligent. For the Christian to be

alert, to be watchful, is very important, for this force constantly tries every trick to put us back into slavery.

I want to conclude by saying that Christ changes the spiral of evil in which we as humanity have been caught. Not only as Christians or as individuals but as humanity we were caught in a spiral of evil that could have led to our destruction long ago. Christ has reversed the spiral. We now have the possibility of using our freedom to go up in the spiral leading toward God.

But we must not go up alone. We must take the creation with us. The main job of freedom today is to take creation with us up the spiral of good, out from the spiral of evil. As we both offer it to God and accept the presence of God in creation it becomes a manifestation of God.

That is the meaning of the God, humanity, and world relationship - as I see it.

VI

Col. 1:15-23

I would like to sum up what the *dominium terrae* or the subjugation of the earth means. Since God put all things under the feet of humankind in Jesus Christ, we shall try to see the relationship between Jesus Christ, his body, and the world.

Let me read from Colossians 1:15-23. "He, Christ, is the icon of God, the manifest form of the unmanifest. First born of all creation, born before creation, since all things - those beyond the horizon of our senses as well as those on earth - were created in him. All things, including such institutional structures as kingships, lordships, regimes, and authorities, were created through him and for him. He himself is. He is prior to all things. All things hold together in Christ. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the originating principle, the first born from the dead as well. So he becomes the first in all things. It was in him that the fullness of being was pleased to dwell. And so to bring together all things to him he made peace by the blood of his cross, reconciling all things, those here on earth and those beyond in

the heavenlies. And you also, formerly alienated from God, at enmity with God through works of evil, are now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death. And you are to be presented to God, holy, without blame or reproach before him. One condition is that you stand firm in the faith, steadfast, unwaveringly holding on to the hope of the gospel you have heard, the gospel proclaimed to all creation on this side of heaven. Of this gospel I, Paul, have become the humble servant.”

The vocation of humanity to frontier existence was perfectly fulfilled by Jesus, the God-anointed Christ. He alone has fulfilled this mediatorial frontier function of the human person. He alone truly mediated God to the created order by his entering the created order as a created human being. He, the true breath of God, became the true human being of the earth, flesh of our flesh, dust of the earth like the rest of us, but also our captain, our elder brother, one of us, one with creation, partaking of matter and human flesh. So this double mediation of bringing God into creation and then “taking creation back to God has been fulfilled in his life.

This is reflected most deeply in Philippians, in the great *kenosis* hymn: “Let this be your attitude, as it was that of Christ Jesus. He was born and subsisted as the form of God. But he did not cling to that status of being equal to God, but was willing to empty himself and took the form of a servant and became a human being. And finding himself as a human being he submitted himself further to the point of death and to the humiliating death on the cross.”

So it is this Christ who emptied himself in order to become one of us who is now the priest of creation, who stands on behalf of the whole creation. The creation is, so to speak, the congregation for which he is the priest. Yet he is entirely one of us. Thus he becomes the true frontier being.

I want to emphasize that it is inside this created order - invaded by God, penetrated by God in Jesus Christ, and now being lifted up to God - that science and technology originate and grow.

Science and technology are not a natural outcome of the process of random evolution. Evolution is both physical and biological. But

within that process there now is humanity capable of transforming. It is extremely important that within the process of biological evolution humanity appears, capable of guiding it and probably also capable of destroying it. We must see this role of humanity in Jesus Christ as the captain of the physical, biological, evolutionary process. Science and technology, the most powerful tools ever given to humans, can be part of the redeeming process if they are themselves redeemed.

Science and technology also need to be redeemed and become servants of God's redeeming economy in Christ. Only a redeemed science/technology can serve the purposes of God both in biological evolution and in Christ, becoming part of that evolutionary process and guiding it up towards God.

This I believe is the true *dominium terrae*. Not simply controlling nature by science/technology but redeeming science/technology itself and guiding the ship of biological evolution towards its God-given purpose.

I want to say something about the church. The church is called the fullness of Christ. The church's function is constantly to be in dialogue with the whole of humanity and to remind humanity of its vocation to guide everything towards the good. Ephesians 1:22 says, "God has put all things under Christ's feet and has given him as head over the whole church, this whole church is his body, the fullness of him who fills and completes all things in every way."

The church has the fullness, has the *pleroma*. This *pleroma* is very significant and important for our understanding. Unfortunately we have lost touch with the intellectual milieu in which the concept arose. So I would like to talk to you about three meanings of *pleroma*, each of which is important for this discussion.

Pleroma in the ordinary sense means fullness. If you have a jar full of water, the water is the fullness or the content of the jar.

But it can also mean something else that is measured by physical fullness. I hope you know what an hour glass looks like. The top chamber is filled with fine sand and is used to measure time. Both the top and bottom chambers are marked so that you can know one

o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock. When the lower chamber fills to a certain point, that is the time appointed for the court to begin. In front of the courthouse will be a big hour glass in which the sand is constantly falling, and when it comes to a particular point you know that the court is assembled. That is the sense in which the New Testament uses the word fullness of time. God sent his Son in the fullness of time.

But there is a *pleroma ton kairon*, which is slightly different. Ephesians 1:10 speaks about the fullness of hours, or the decisive hour. That is not the hour of Christ's incarnation but the final hour when all things are put under Christ's feet. Both are fullness of time, the fullness of time for the incarnation and the fullness of time when all things shall be put under Christ's feet.

So we are between the two fullnesses of time. We are between the *pleroma ton chronon* in which the incarnation took place (Galatians 4:4) and the *pleroma ton kairon*, which is the final appointed hour when the fulfillment will take place.

There is another meaning of *pleroma* that was important in the milieu in which Colossians and Hebrews were written. It is a gnostic meaning. The Gnostics made a distinction between fullness of being, or *pleroma*, and shadow, which they developed into a fundamental tenet of their faith. They held that there is fullness of being, *pleroma*, and there is shadow being. The *pleroma* for the Gnostics was the place from which the savior comes to take us out of this shadow world and back into the fullness. That was the gnostic understanding of salvation. The word *savior* was an important term for them, and Christian Gnostics applied their understanding of the concept to Christ. So Christ came from the heaven for us, individual souls, to take us from this world of shadow back in the *ogdoad*, the fullness of being. Unfortunately, much of modern Christian fundamentalism works on this same understanding of salvation. The savior comes from above this world to pick up a few souls and goes back there so the souls can be with him.

It was in opposition to this kind of *pleroma skia* understanding that both Hebrews and Colossians were written. The epistle to the

Colossians speaks of festivals, sabbaths, and new moons as *skia ton mellonton*, a shadow copy of that which is to come. Colossians 2:1-7 speaks about this. The King James Version reads, "... which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." The Revised Standard Version has fouled up the meaning by translating the passage as "... these are only a shadow of what is to come but the substance belongs to Christ." There is no justification whatsoever for translating *soma* as substance. *Soma Christou* cannot be translated as substance of Christ. To me the meaning is: that the coming reality is the body of Christ.

That is a very bold statement. The coming reality is the body of Christ.

This is the context in which we come to the third meaning of *pleroma*. Ephesians 1:23 says the church is the body of him, the fullness of him who in everything fills all. This third meaning points to that which fills out and completes. We see the sense in Matthew 9:16, which says, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk new cloth on to, an old garment for that which fills up the garment will tear away, from the garment so that there is a worse tear in it." The word used for "that which fills up the garment" is *pleroma*. The patch that you sew on to fill a hole in a garment is called a *pleroma*. If you have a glass three quarters full and if anybody asks you what is the *pleroma* of that glass, it is not the - three - quarters of content but the one quarter necessary to fill it. That which will complete and make it full is the *pleroma*. This is the sense in which the church is the *pleroma*. The church fills out and completes the incarnate Christ.

The church also fills out and completes the sufferings of Christ, according to St. Paul. To understand how all things are to be subordinated to Christ and how humanity, the church, and the rest of the world are related to this process, we need a further theological understanding of who Christ is. And we need to do it in four dimensions, not space-time dimensions, but four dimensions.

First, there is Jesus Christ, the historical person. That is the initial dimension of the incarnate Christ. He was on earth for a limited period of thirty to thirty-five years and has gone beyond the visibility

horizon and is at the right hand of God as our high priest.

The second dimension is Christ with his body, the church. Jesus Christ wanted to share the rule with his body, so the body is incorporated into him. By the body I mean more than just the Christians, who are now living. I mean all the people whom Christ has drawn into his body from the beginning - the apostles, Mary, the prophets, the martyrs, all the Christians who have gone on before us, those of us who are here now, and those to come in the future. These together constitute the body, the fullness of him that fills all in all. That is the second dimension of Christ.

The third dimension is Christ with humanity. Christ did not assume only the church in the incarnation. He assumed humanity. Although the church is his body, Christ assumed the whole of humanity in its fullness. In some strange way that I cannot theologically formulate. Christ is related to all humanity in a very specific way. It is not exactly the same as his relation to the church where he is acknowledged, where he is constantly praised, worshiped, adored, loved. Even among those who do not acknowledge him the incarnation makes a profound difference because it is their humanity too that he has assumed. That is why we cannot dismiss other religions or the atheists or the unbelievers as if they have nothing to do with Christ.

Christ did not assume only one man, Jesus, but Jesus Christ assumed the whole of humanity. It is within that humanity that science and technology function. To ignore that aspect can be dangerous.

The fourth dimension is the eschatological dimension, the dimension of the final fulfilment. Ephesians calls it *anakephalaiosis*, the gathering up of everything under one head. This includes more than humanity. It includes all in heaven and earth, principalities and powers, angels, whatever existences there are, including material existences and organic life. All these are finally to be added up. That is the fourth or cosmic dimension of Christ.

Unless we keep all these four dimensions - the incarnate Jesus Christ who is our high priest. Christ with his body. Christ with humanity and Christ with the whole cosmos in the eschatological final reconciliation - unless we keep all these four in their relation to each

other, we will be misunderstanding the nature of Christ and will be trying to corner Christ for us as Christians. When somebody asked Gandhi, 'Why aren't you a Christian?' he said, "I would have been a Christian but for the Christians." His experience with the Christians, especially in South Africa, was decisive for him. Let not Christians think that Christ belongs to us, as our property. We go and hit other people with Christ, as if he were our man. No. He is the *one* in whom they and we all exist.

This corporate entity called humanity is, like the church, a process. Those who have gone before, those who are coming behind are all one flow of humanity. This humanity does not exist in isolation from the rest of creation. Humanity cannot survive without the biosphere. And not only biosphere is essential. Everything in humanity seems to be dependent - on air and water and food, but also on the sun. And the sun itself is dependent on other systems. The corporate entity of humanity exists as part of so many systems, I read just last week of a flow, a solar wind coming from the sun and enveloping the earth in a kind of cushion. This flow travels at supersonic speed constantly from the sun. It is not visible to our eyes because it is plasma. We understand now that the space near earth is not a vacuum, but a plasma above the stratosphere. It is not empty. We are, so to speak, cradled by the sun, supplied by the energy of the sun. This earth and the sun are all of one package and this corporate humanity exists within that package; without that package, it cannot exist.

The relationship between humanity and the known created order is very complex. One of the processes of that relationship is humanization - changing nature, dealing with nature, exchanging with nature, and thus becoming human and making the planet human.

The humanization of creation on our planet has three dimensions. I shall mention them and then leave it there.

The first dimension is science and technology. Without this *stoffwechsel*, this constant interacting with nature, we could not get food or other necessities. Human existence is based on science and technology's dealing with nature.

The second dimension is the political economy, in which the social

sciences also play a major role. Organized human labor, not-just single individuals, deals with the world. And as soon as human labor becomes organized it becomes involved in a political economy. Political economy is dealing with nature and with each other in that process.

This is where I have to say something very strong: Let us not pretend that science can be isolated from the package of science/technology or from the package of science/technology/political economy if we try to isolate science we misunderstand it Science does not exist in isolation, up in the air. It exists only as an enterprise of organized humanity within a political economy. It does not exist as an ideal reality.

The third dimension is culture with its value choices. It involves the activity by which we transform matter into expressions of beauty and truth, the expressions of a humanly created reality.

These three dimensions are all bound up together. Culture is closely linked to science/technology, which is closely linked to political economy.

It is in this kind of a world that the church as the body of Christ is asked to serve, to listen, to dialogue. "Brothers and sisters in the world, what have you found out ... tell us?" Then as we converse with them we also think with them about how to use what we have found out for the best purposes of the kingdom of God. That is the dialogue of faith and science - religious people finding out from the community of those who are, actually doing the scientific/technological work what they have learned about how things work and how to work on things. In that process we identify ourselves with them and their dilemmas, not telling them the "truth" with authority. We cannot tell them which way science/technology should go. But when talking with them, we can ask, "Shouldn't it go this way rather than that way?"

A major part of research now deals with how to kill more people with less effort. And another major drive of research is how to get the most profit with the least investment. These have become two dominant purposes around which science and technology are largely oriented.

Redeeming science and technology is a job not just of the Christians. It must be done by the scientists and the technologists and the political economists and all of us together. True *dominium terrae* will come when we, along with our brothers and sisters in the other religions, along with the unbelievers, along with our brothers and sisters in the scientific community whether Christian or non-Christian, when all of us together Struggle - struggle through suffering, struggle through pain, struggle through occasional conflict - to make sure that creation is going in the direction in which God wants.

11

A New Heaven And A New Earth

The passage I have chosen for this morning's study is in the Book of Revelation, 21:1-11 and 21 ff.

“And I saw a new heaven and new earth; the former heaven and the former earth vanished, and the oceans were no longer there, and I saw the holy city Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, from God; made ready like a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice speaking from the throne: ‘Behold God’s glorious tent is with human being. God will pitch his glorious tent among them, they will be his people and God himself shall be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, death shall no longer be, fear, cry and pain shall cease to be, for the former system has passed away.’ The one who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make the whole universe new,’ then he said, ‘Write down, these words are reliable and true,’ then he said, ‘It is done, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end, the origin and destiny; To the thirsty one, I will give to drink from the fountain of the water of life freely. The victor, that is the one who overcomes, shall inherit these privileges, and I will be to him God, and he will be to me Son; but to the undisciplined, the unfaithful, the depraved, the murderers, the fornicators, the devotees of black magic and idol worship, in short, to all false human beings, their destiny shall be meted out in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, a second death.’

Now came one of the seven angels and spoke to me saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and he carried me away by the spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, resplendent with

the glory of God, bright with light like a precious stone, shining like a jasper, clear as crystal. Its twelve gates are twelve pearls, each gate just one huge pearl, and the pavement of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. I could see no temple in the city, for the Lord God, the All-Sovereign, is its temple along with the Lamb. This city has no need either for the sun or for the moon to shine upon it, for the light of the glory of God, illumines it, and its lamp is the Lamb. In its light the nations walk; into it the kings of the earth bring their glory. Its gates are never shut by day or by night, but of course night there is no more there. The glory and honour of the nations they bring into it, but nothing of abomination or uncleanness can enter it; only those whose names are inscribed in the Lamb's book of life."

Apocalyptic literature is a stranger to us; it does not belong to our ethos, and we feel uncomfortable with it, especially because the source of apocalyptic literature is suffering, whereas the source of bourgeois art is comfort. Literature which comes out of persecution, out of affliction, out of torture, out of death, is a stranger to us because it disturbs us. We are people who like to have things equanimous, unruffled, comfortable; struggle against time, for work yes, but not silence; avoid silence, avoid conflict; that is our ethos, bourgeois comfort. Therefore, to attempt a scientific analysis of this passage in the Book of Revelation by using our academic criteria is a foolish thing. You miss the point when you do that; it is not that kind of literature. Yes, you can classify its genre, you can find its parallels in other literature, you can identify its historical references, you can understand its symbolism — all these things may illuminate the passage, but not necessarily convey its real message. That message is: In the midst of oppression and persecution, be filled with hope — hope based on reality, and therefore a hope that does not make us ashamed. Yes, in other words apocalyptic literature is a kind of denial of present reality and its ultimacy. It is an affirmation of a future reality so that we can live out that reality in the present. It does not run away from the present, but denies the ultimacy of the present,

and lives out the future. Apocalyptic literature, that is christian eschatology, is the only way Christians can live in a world of injustice, oppression, suffering, and affliction. But what is this ultimate reality? The ultimate reality is heavenly Jerusalem. In heavenly Jerusalem, there is no night, no pain, no tear, no oppression, no death, and so no fear. It is out of that reality that Christians lived gladly and with joy in the midst of persecution and oppression. It is a different kind of attitude and spirit, and I think in the struggle of the oppressed people of the world, the hardest thing for those of us who have some share in it, is to move out of the values of our comfortable bourgeois living and get into this kind of an apocalyptic living. It is tough, it is hard, but unless we can do that, a great deal of our work becomes simply beating about the bush. Of course, you can caricature this approach by calling it 'Pie in the sky by and by when you die'. But that is not the point; it is not simply saying that in the future everything will be alright, therefore just take what comes to you. It is an embodiment of the future that we have to live in the present. We must live today out of tomorrow.

Now, that is good; I think even contemporary theologians will accept that. But there is a catch there. In this future reality, there are two things: light-- bright resplendent light that is truth with justice; truth with justice, that is what the future is, and also the absence of pain, tears, fear and death. But you see what we would like to do even in our eschatological theology is not to make a distinction between these two.

Truth and Justice belong to the future, the absence of pain and the absence of suffering also belong to the future, but in the present, only one of these things can be realised, namely truth and justice, but not the absence of pain and the absence of fear and death. That is where we have difficulty; we would like to have the absence of pain and absence of suffering in our world, but not the concern for truth and justice. That is what has happened to us in our bourgeois civilization. We have put the absence of pain and the absence of suffering as a higher value than truth and justice. Whereas eschatological living demands the opposite. Treat the suffering and the pain now, there you do not live out of the future, you live out of the cross, the present,

but truth and justice, which belongs to the future, that we must embody here. That is the basic conflict between the bourgeois way and a Christian way of approaching life. Truth and justice, which belong to the future, must be embodied now, but the absence of pain and the absence of affliction and suffering cannot be embodied here and now. It must be taken in the full force and lived out courageously and gladly.

The Cross and the Resurrection had to be held together in our time. You cannot just have the resurrection. The Cross belongs equally to Christ and the existence in time living by the cross as well as by the resurrection. But what we try to do is to avoid the Cross and just have the Resurrection, and even in our struggle as black people, as oppressed people, as people who are trampled upon by others, we want to get out of it without a struggle; by simple parliamentary debate and by speaking a powerful word in a declaration, or by creating a movement makes declarations. A year ago, at the time of the Cambodia speech, I was in this country and I was talking in some colleges in this country. I noticed that there was a lot of vitality on the part of the students. The students said, 'We are going to stop this war,' and suddenly they struck work and they did certain dramatic things and they had hoped that in about a week or two the war would be over and everything would be comfortable and everybody could live comfortably thereafter.

In the young people's struggle for justice too, this is the problem. The problem is that you would like to get to the Resurrection without the Cross; just make a big revolt and overnight the Resurrection will take place. I would say that the toughest problem that faces us who are fighting against a monstrous oppressor is that we lack the staying power necessary to see it to the end. We want quick results. That is basically the bourgeois temperament. I don't know how we can develop that staying power. What I read to you is the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Revelation, but the twenty chapters that go before it are full of blood, animals, fights, and plagues; it is only at the end that the heavenly Jerusalem comes. There is no short-cut to heavenly Jerusalem. Yes, I have realised that eschatology can be very lopsided; it can be premature. We need to adjust ourselves to this new way of

struggling; and that is why sometime yesterday, even last night in the discussion, I got the impression that we are trying to evaluate the Programme to Combat Racism in terms of the immediate results it has achieved for us. And of course we got some publicity, we got some new friends, we have got a few things done for some people, and then we say, well that's all right we have done that, and now we must go on to something painless. This is the temptation that faces us; it is a temptation the Church as a whole seems unable to face; only a few in the churches or outside can really take the brunt of this kind of struggle. That is why the Christian life is always a vicarious life. Everybody ought to do what you are doing but they will not. You have to take the brunt of the attack on you and probably lose your life in that process; out of that something may come. Now this losing life business is the toughest thing for us because it takes faith to have that kind of courage to lose one's life. I do not know how you create that faith in the movement of the oppressed against the oppressor. It is not simply a matter of hope, and living out of the hope, but also having faith.

Faith, knowing that perhaps I may fail, my generation may be unable to achieve what I am struggling for, but ultimately, it is the Lamb, slain, who sits on the throne, in the heavenly Jerusalem. That is it; with your head chopped off, you can reign. I do not think that I want to say much more than that this morning. The seer, the writer of the Apocalypse, is asked a question by the angel: 'Do you see these white people with their robes clean and white and shining, do you know who they are?' And the seer says, 'No, I do not know, you tell me'. And he says, 'They are the ones who have cleansed their clothes in the blood of the Lamb'. Yes, how did they cleanse their clothes in the blood of the Lamb? By shedding their own blood. That is how they cleaned them. Not the way I heard an evangelist once demonstrated in America in my younger days when I came here as a student. He demonstrated two test-tubes in his hand. One was a dark black liquid, the other was a red liquid. He poured the red liquid into that black liquid, and the whole thing became a clear transparent solution; and then he said that's how the blood of Jesus cleanses people. But for these persecuted people, the blood of the Lamb meant

their own blood, because they are members of the body of Christ, and when they shed their blood, that is the blood of the Lamb, and that is how they cleansed their own.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, forgive us in our love of comfort, in our fear of conflict, in our desire to achieve quick result, in our unwillingness to suffer, in our desire to be popular, and acknowledge by all as the saviours of the world. Grant us the wisdom of the Cross; that we may struggle without fear, resting in thy love, rejoicing in thy light, but not afraid to suffer. Give us courageous hearts, give us the spirit of hope, give us charity and wisdom, that we may know how to bring the damned and the oppressed from bondage into freedom, and there find our own liberation. Grant us wisdom to think and to speak, and to act in accordance with thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

2. Babel Or Pentecost?

Today I want to reflect with you on two passages. One from the old Testament, and one from the New Testament. From the old Testament, it is the story of Babel, Genesis 11:1-9

“And the whole earth was of one language, and used the same words. And as they moved out of the East, they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and settled there. Then they said to each other, ‘come let us make bricks and bake them well in the fire,’ and the bricks were for them stone, and asphalt for mortar and they said, ‘come let us build a city and a tower, whose top shall penetrate the skies; we will make ourselves a name, and we shall not be scattered all over the face of the earth. Then Yahweh came down to visit the city and the tower that human beings had built, and Yahweh said ‘Look what one single people speaking a single language can do, and this is only the beginning of their enterprise, and if this goes on, nothing will be impossible for them. Let us go down, let us mix up their language, so that one does not understand his neighbour. So Yahweh dispersed them

from there over the whole face of the earth, and they ceased to build the city. Therefore one calls it Babel, for it was there that God, EI, confused Balaal, the language of all the inhabitants of the earth. It was from there that he dispersed them over the whole surface of the earth”.

The passage from the New Testament is taken from the second chapter of the Book of Acts, the familiar passage about the Pentecostal experience. I am taking it out of the Revised Standard Version.

“And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place, and suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared to them, tongues as of fire distributed and resting on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there was, living in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven, and at this sound, the multitude came together, and they were bewildered because each one heard them speaking in his own language, and they were amazed and wondered saying. ‘Are not all these who are speaking, Galileans, and how is it that we hear each one of us in his own native language; Partheans, and Medes, and Elamities, and residents of Mesopotamia, in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians; we hear them telling in our own languages, the mighty works of God. And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘what does this mean?’; but others mocking said, ‘they are filled with new wine’.

Let us pray: *Almighty Gracious God, giver of life and light, from whom is all wisdom and power and creativity, send forth thy spirit afresh upon us that we may behold the nature of our*

existence on this earth and do that which is well pleasing in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Here are two stories: One from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, both normally incredible to most modern people, both relating to the question of languages, but also having something to do with races. One is about the separation of the languages, and the other is about the coming together of the languages and their mutual communication; the second is in a sense, the first in reverse. But that is not the main point that I want to make. Let us look at the story of Babel. Modern scholars, especially not very modern but semi-modern scholars, have separated the story into two separate stories.

Dunkel, for example, who wrote in the early part of the century, has separated this narrative into two different stories and has traced in a very hypothetical but interesting manner their source. Whatever it is, it is the way in which the Jewish people of, say, the sixth or seventh Century BC were trying to understand how the different nations had been separated and their understanding is that it happened because of the pride of men in organizing themselves, as a single city with a tower whose top would penetrate the skies. That is their understanding of how the divisions of humanity came about into various nations and races. Of course, we have now discovered various towers or ziggurats as we call them; in that area of Babylon, archaeological evidence has shown that such towers were common. There is a temple of Marduk in Babylon, discovered now, which was restored by Nabopolassar. Nabopolassar has put an inscription which says that he was commanded by the God Marduk to build this tower, with its foundation in the belly of the underworld and its top in the heavens; that is what the inscription says. So, there is some basis to this story. It probably has come out of this inscription. The inscription says it is supposed to reach the top of the heavens. There is another Ziggurat which is called the seven stages of earth and heaven. The idea of the ziggurat, the big tower, is always to connect earth and heaven to various stages of ascent by which you can climb to the top and there commune with God. The Jewish tradition isolates another ziggurat which is about 153 feet high and that was perhaps the tower of Babylon; but whatever it is, it does not matter too much.

I think we have a very delicate problem here. You know that both Van Leeuwen and Harvey Cox have dealt at great length on this question of the tower of Babylon and its exegesis. Harvey Cox's solution is that we should build a tower whose top does not reach into heaven but just stops this side of heaven and stay here. It is the same thing that Van Leeuwen also tries to say, that we build a secular city which does not need to penetrate into the sky, it stays in this world. And there you build the tower or the secular city and that is all the paradise you can hope for. I don't think we can have it that easy. Whatever the act was, the Hebrews were saying it was a wrong act in having gotten together baked bricks and built a city whose tower would penetrate the sky. The Jews did not think that was the proper thing to do and God obviously got quite annoyed and anxious that if these people could build a tower like this and come right up to my throne, then what could they not do if they were left alone like that. So God had to come down and there was consultation in heaven and they said let us go down and confuse their language so that they don't go on with this kind of enterprise.

What were the Jews trying to say? As I understand it, until mankind has achieved a certain level of maturity it cannot organize itself to utilize the full quantum of its power. Man has a tremendous capacity or possibility of power, but you will not be allowed to organize that power to its full quantum until you have reached a certain level of maturity. Of course we try all the time to organize our power to achieve fantastic things, and then somehow the axe comes because we have not become mature enough to handle that kind of power. And that I think is in a sense what has happened to our civilization, the western civilization as a whole. Western civilization at one time built up a tremendous amount of power, but it lacked the maturity to handle that power, therefore the axe is slowly falling upon it. It has not shown itself to be capable yet of organizing the world. The explosion of the West beginning about the 15th century into the rest of the world has brought so many new ideas, and new values into the rest of the world, has dispelled many idols, has driven away a lot of superstition, has quickened and elevated the consciousness of many oppressed people, and in that sense the white man had a certain

missionary role in the economy of God at one time. And he thought that he could organize the world in such a way that it would be one world that he could keep for himself and exploit for his own purposes. It is at this time that Babylon is destroyed. That is the first point I wanted to make.

The second point that I wanted to make is connected with the Pentecostal experience. We have two different sorts of procedures here, one is that humanity organizing itself to ascend the seventh stage of earth and heaven and to get to the top and penetrate the skies, the other is the spirit of God coming and rushing like a mighty wind and coming and getting hold of twelve Galilean fishermen. Absolutely powerless people and making them a power which people had to reckon with. These are two different movements, one is an organization of all the people of the earth to penetrate to Godhood. The other, a mighty wind coming from heaven giving life and strength and force and wisdom and power to a very insignificant, very small minority and giving it life. Now here, I don't want to say that we, the oppressed people of the world, are the Pentecostal people and the white man is simply the tower of Babel. I don't want to make that Contrast. But I am simply speaking of two different ways of approaching this problem and I think that many of our people also are trying to build a tower the Babel way, rather than waiting for the other force. But what does waiting for the other force mean? Does it mean that, well, some day God will, in his own good time, bring justice to the world because the spirit of God is active in the world? I don't believe so because when the spirit of God comes there are three possible reactions.

One reactions is, of course, there were the people who said 'they are drunk with new wine'. It is just passing enthusiasm, these students will revolt for one week, but if you are tough to stop them, then they will calm down, these brats after all what can they do, they start making a lot of noise for some time, but if we are calm, and use our power properly, they will finally calm down. "They are drunk with new wine", this is not a movement of the Spirit. You can say that about PCR. There may be people who are saying that.

But I think there is a second group of people who are beginning to ask: What does this mean? What does this mean, there is a new force, there is a new blowing of the spirit in the world and many people are still not sure about its meaning. They are not saying the whole thing is meaningless and insignificant. They ask what this means. What do the Panthers mean for me? What does the Black power Movement mean for me? What does Liberated Territory in Angola mean for me? What does the tremendous courage and strength that Vietnam shows against the super power mean? There are many people who are beginning to ask this question— does it have any meaning in terms of the spirit coming? And I think all we need to have is a credible interpretation of Christianity in which the spirit is seen to be the one who is at work in these movements of the down-trodden and the oppressed. That is I think our more important task as PCR. This little group of people who are not totally unsympathetic to these new movement but who are simply asking the question “What does this mean?”

There is a third group, the apostles, who are a minority, who are very small group but who have accepted the power of the Spirit and who are now prepared to confront the powers-that-be and also to interpret what they are doing. They are saying, “No, these are not drunk with new wine, it is the power of the spirit which God has promised”. Now, the extent to which we can relate the work of God to the struggle of the dispossessed and the oppressed will also be the test of the credibility of the Gospel for many people. But they say there is no connection between the spirit of God and these new movements and you don't need to completely say that everything that happens in these new movements is from God but if there is nothing of the Spirit in these new movements and if the church is not able to interpret to the world which is puzzled about these new movements, what it is in these new movements that belongs to the spirit, then our Gospel would, I am afraid, become invalid. And so the church finds itself in a very delicate situation. What do I do with my African friend or Negro friend who has rejected Christianity because he has found it in a particular form and has reacted so negatively against Christ that he does not want to have anything to do with the

church, or with the Bible. He thinks that gospel of the book isn't anything because it has been used to exploit him. How can I come back to him and say, "well, we have really blundered in our interpretations of the Bible", how do we communicate that authentically that the Bible, the Christian faith does still speak about the God who is on the side of the oppressed, on the side of the emancipation of man. This is, I think, our task in communication as PCR, we may not be able directly to organize the dispossessed and oppressed people of the world to fight against the monsters. That may not be our mandate, but it is in our identification in more than words with those who are oppressed that we shall again be able to communicate the powers of the spirit in a new way to the world, and I think the world is waiting for that kind of a message. But the moment you do that the High Priests will be there to arrest you, to take you to the court, and to try you. So don't worry, you won't be left in peace, and it won't be a very smooth operation. If PCR wants to do its job, it won't be a smooth operation, and you will be called on the carpet. But then to what extent can we remain as the unit of the World Council and still do what we should do. That, I think, is the job before us.

Let us pray: *To live and to speak with boldness and to lay down own lives with the same boldness, grant us the Pentecostal Spirit. Thou seest the confusion that the pride of men has caused in the world, where power is organized still for oppression and exploitation. Grant us, O God, the strength both to challenge the power that is oppressing and to reorganize in a way that shall be more mature, which shall make Thee come down to us not to destroy us but to strengthen us. Grant us humility, sense of our proper limits, grant us wisdom to see the vision of what Thou wouldst have us to do and grant us Thy strength that we may do it trusting in Thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

3. Church As A Gymnasium

Grant us Thy Spirit that we may behold Thy vision and be strengthened by Thy spirit. Teach us Thy word that is life. We commit ourselves into Thy hands in this hour and all the hours of

our life so that whatever we may do may be for the glory and honour of Thy name, in Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Today again I want to take two brief passages: One from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. From the old Testament, it is a passage from the book of Genesis again, Genesis 9:1-11. It is the story after the flood in the time of Noah. After the flood has subsided, Noah constructed an altar and worshiped God.

“God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Bear fruit, multiply and fill the earth. Be feared and held in awe by all the animals of the earth and all the birds of the sky, all reptiles that creep on the land, and all the fish of the sea, they are in your hand. Everything that moves on the earth and have life shall be food for you. I give them to you as I gave you the vegetables before. The only exception is you shall not eat flesh with its soul, that is with its blood. But I shall hold you accountable for the blood, that is for the soul of each of you I shall hold accountable all living beings, animals and men. For the life of men I shall hold, I shall hold his brother accountable for the life of man. Yes, I shall demand responsibility for the life of men from all. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God was man made. But you bear fruit, multiply, abound on the earth, fill it with people.” God spoke thus to Noah and his sons saying, “Behold I make with you my agreement and with your descendants in posterity with all the living beings with you, birds, beasts, all animals of the earth with you, with all who have come out of the ark with you, with all living beings upon earth, with you I make my covenant. No flesh shall be destroyed again by the waters of the deluge, there shall no more be deluge to destroy the earth”. (Genesis 9:1-11)

Then a passage from I Timothy 1:7-10.

“Train yourselves for the service of God, even physical

training is of some value, but training for the service of God is in every way of value for its whole force hope in the present life as well as in the life to come. This word is absolutely reliable and everybody should give full attention to it. It is for this that we toil and struggle for. Our hope is in the living God who is the deliverer and liberator of all men though is a greater measure saviour of those who are believers.”

I want first to say something about this Old Testament passage. The first eleven chapters of the Bible have an ethos which is slightly different from the rest of the Old Testament. In the rest of the Old Testament, Jewish particularism is much more evident. But in the early chapters, God's relationship is with all men everywhere. It becomes narrowed down only after the 11 chapters, and becomes concentrated on the Jewish people as the specially chosen people for God's purposes. But the point I want to make from the passages is that God has a covenant with all humanity. God is not the God of the Christians, of the Jews, of the Muslims alone, God is the God of all men, all living flesh, everything that is created. And everyman is accountable to God whether he knows it or not. That is the point of the covenant with Noah. If we eat all flesh, flesh with a soul, the soul of man, I shall hold every man responsible, of even the beasts --I shall hold responsible for the soul of man. I want to make that very clear that God is concerned not only about Christians and about other people becoming Christians. God is concerned with every human being and God holds every human being responsible for the soul or the essence, or for the real being of man. Therefore, when Christians become preoccupied only with their own salvation and the salvation of other people, only to their membership in the Church, we are somehow forgetting the fact that God has a certain relationship which is one of responsibility with all mankind. And what we now have in our world is that people are shedding the blood of men either literally or in terms of destroying their dignity and they are accountable to God. Any understanding of the Gospel which is only in terms of the Church and membership in the Church is a distortion of the basic Biblical vision, which includes God's relationship to the whole of mankind and responsibility that all mankind bears before God. I think

that one is again brought out in the letter of Paul to Timothy? (Whether it is Timothy or not is another matter.) God is the God of all men. He is the saviour of all men, especially of those who are believers. The Greek is very clear. He is first of all the saviour of all mankind but especially in a special way of those who believe. You cannot limit God's saving activity only to those who are in the Church and those who are believers. He is the saviour of all men. This is what the New Testament says, not just the Old Testament. When I say this I get into trouble even in my own Church. A full-fledged controversy is going on in my Church now— a priest in my Church has publicly accused me of heresy for saying this. And I know that and I have said "you can crucify me if you like but this is my understanding of Christianity". I think we have somewhere along the way made a basic distortion of this point, when we have tried to domesticate God as the God of the Christians, who is concerned only about them. That is our problem, our hang up, even in the Churches. The Churches are saying all these problems with races and so on, but they have nothing to do with religion. Religion is only for those who are in the Church and those who believe. I don't know how we will get around that. I don't know how we will break open this kind of attempt to domesticate God for the Christians and to hold God as a possession of the Christians. That is my first point.

My second point is that our understanding of the Spirit and of Christ does not allow us to limit God's activity to the Church. According to the Biblical understanding of the Spirit, Pentecost was not the first time the Holy Spirit showed himself. The spirit was there at the very beginning of creation, the creation is not an act in which the Spirit stands outside. You were told in the first verses of Genesis that the Spirit of God was hovering upon the face of the waters, I think the Holy Spirit must be understood as one who has many activities. He has a multiple strategy and he is concerned with the whole creation and my understanding of the Holy Spirit is that one of the basic activities of the Spirit is to bring form out of formlessness and to bring light into darkness. This is my understanding of the Spirit in the creation itself. To bring form out of what is chaotic and to bring light where there is darkness. Form and light.

If this is so, then wherever there is struggle for justice and community, I find the Spirit of God operating. This is what my Lutheran friends find completely unacceptable, they say that the Holy Spirit is available only to those who are baptized. There are people in my Church who even go further and say the Holy Spirit is available only to the clergy. I think we have to see this that the work of God in time is a work in which form or meaning, significance, shape, purpose is brought in where it is chaotic, purposeless drifting, dying. To bring light into darkness, that is wherever, there is evil, injustice, there light must come, and light is a moral term in the Bible. If you walk in the light, I am the light, you shall walk in my light. You are the light of the world. It is a moral term. A term which indicates with a symbol of what man should be and how he should live. God is light, man is also to be given light. So I would say that the Holy spirit should not be too easily domesticated. For in the attempt to domesticate God is the attempt to domesticate the Holy Spirit. Equally we domesticate Christ when we say Christ is our possession, those who belong to the Church, those who are members of the Body of Christ, there alone Christ belongs and my Lutheran friends say, they have got a formula which is taken from medieval Latin: "ubi Christus ibi Spiritus" where Christ is there is also the Spirit. Because Christ is in the Church where he is believed in therefore only the Spirit is only where he is believed in. But if we put it the other way, Christ is also an agent in creation and he was -- there is no division of labour in the Holy Trinity-- it work as a single unit, God works in a single unit in relation to the creation. Salvation wrought in Christ is just not for the believers. Christ died for all men.

St Paul says in the 8th chapter of Romans, not only about all men, but even about things that they are to be saved. This is a fantastic chapter in which he says, "The whole creation is groaning in travail now anticipating the salvation, the coming into the glory of the sons of God and he says the creation itself shall be set free from its bondage to decay and share in the glorious liberty of the children of God. In other words, tables and chairs are also to participate in the salvation of Jesus Christ. I cannot conceptually interpret this to you, but I do believe that in the new heaven and the new earth, the transcendent

world about which I have a very firm hope and belief, matter itself shall be transmuted into a different physical structure and it will no longer be subject to the second law of thermodynamics, namely that everything is giving away energy and disintegrating. Everything is dying; things must be reconstituted in an opposite way so that everything is moving towards life. The whole direction of the structure of matter itself will be changed. So I cannot limit Christ's salvation just to the believer. It is to be expanded all the way even to the whole universe, the matter of which Christ took his flesh. That has already been transmuted in another direction. The physical body of Jesus has been shaped in a new way that is no longer subject to decay and death. And in that, matter itself has been redeemed and if that is so, then to think that only Christians will participate in the salvation of Jesus Christ is nonsense.

Then the famous question comes back: "What use is it of being a Christian?" Then I can only say that that question shows how terribly greedy and selfish we really still are. Only if I can get some special advantage will I be a Christian. What do I want to become a Christian for? So that I can get a special advantage than that nobody else can get. Otherwise what is the point of becoming a Christian? This shows our basic cheapness, our kind of meanness, our kind of selfishness where we want always to get something which nobody else gets, where we have not really been saved, because if you are saved you would not be that mean. Of course you have a question, "What is the difference with being a Christian?" I cannot say that there is no difference, there is a real difference, but I don't want to talk about that difference in terms of my getting something which other people don't get, but in terms of my having a special relationship to God which puts an additional responsibility on me. I have consciously been brought in to the household of God, into the presence of God, that I live in his presence, know him as my father and that makes me more responsible, that makes me more committed to the purposes for which he is operating. That is, I think, the basic distinction in the life of the Christians.

It is precisely what my Hindu friends say "We can't see any real difference between you Christians and us in practical terms. You

Christian are no more noble, no more sacrifice-minded, no more concerned for other people than we are and my Hindu friend is modest enough to say "We don't claim that we are better than you but we can't say you are better than us." That is our problem. Unless the Christian Church shows that quality of life which makes it clear to other people that we are more deeply committed to the purpose of God than other people, then all our preaching will not carry any conviction, and if the purpose of God is the salvation of all men, then all reality then the degree of our commitment to that purpose is the measure by which our own Christian messages are to be measured.

I want to say one last thing, about the training of the Christians. The verse in I Timothy 1:7 "Train yourself for the service of God" the word from which we get gymnasium. It is the same word which is used for the sports training field of the Roman Theater. That is what it is. We have to go in to a training establishment to shape yourselves up if you are to do the service of God in this world. Today that is where we get stuck. I don't think that the Church should be regarded as as a service agency as much as training agency. The Church should be able to give Christians the kind of training that will equip them for doing the will of God, the service of God. That is the same word with which they call religions. We Christians have become very averse to training. What is training? Listening to a few sermons, or speeches or a Bible study — that is our idea of training. But it is the idea of askesis or asceticism as you call it. Asceticism is not a word which means having a long face, having a beard and sitting without eating anything. Asceticism is a word which speaks also about the training of man, it also comes from the sports field. Now one of our difficulties is that we, most of us, as bourgeois Christians are untrained for living in this world and doing what we have to do. We have put ourselves in a soft world not in the gymnasium of God, and that is why we are so ineffective. At some point in the game we must once again think, even as PCR, how do you make Christians sufficiently well-trained for the fight in the service of God. In asceticism you have very strict diet regulations, regulations about fasting, regulations about eating at a particular time, a particular kind of food and what you have to do every day and so on. These are the

rules of the Church, which are the rules of training. These are not rules which are absolutely divine laws given from God, which you must always live by. It is a total misunderstanding to understand the rules of the gymnasium as the rules of life. The rules of the gymnasium are meant to equip you for the race and the race must be right and what happens to us is that we have sat back and say, well we have these rules in the Church and we live by these rules and that it is it. We never get out from the gymnasium into the sports field. And so, to see the relationship between Christian training and the work of the Churches would be of the utmost importance.

And today I would say the most important kind of fasting, of abstinence, that we need to introduce into the Church is the abstinence from greed, personal acquisitive greed. Acquisition of wealth, acquisition of power, acquisition of positions—that is the greed that dominates us and we have to fast at that point. This is one of the most important elements for the training for the service of God that I see in our time. If the Church is unable to deliver men from the greediness, of this acquisitiveness, I don't think we will get the first place in the fight against the world, and we, the church bureaucrats, often get caught up in this greed in this position, in this fighting for credit, fighting for publicity and fighting for money. Unless we get out of that, I don't think the Church will be ever powerful enough. What Nixon was talking about last night, "America has never been defeated." In other words, We must hold that power. That is one philosophy in which you say that the most important thing is our wealth, our position, and our power that we must somehow hold. Once that is your basic orientation, you cannot really be effective in the struggle for justice, in the struggle for the kingdom in the world.

How do we develop a training? I must say that preaching won't do it. You can tell people "don't be greedy, you should not be greedy", that does not help. I sometimes get quite worried about the fact that the only place where this has been really an historical example is in China. The real fight against greed is now being carried out only in China. It worries me. It is what the Church is supposed to do. There is a basic orientation which is to deliver men from this acquisitive life. There are many other countries where the same thing is being done

or had been done in the past, but I think we need to find in the Church a way to train people for the the services of God, the gymnasia for diakonia. Diakonia cannot come without this initial training. I would say that also what Paul says to Timothy, this is sure word, this is a reliable word God is the saviour of all, in Him you can put your trust, he will not let you be disappointed. All your movements may ultimately make you disappointed, but these people who have been sorely and badly hit by putting all their hope in a particular movement and then been betrayed by it. There is sure word, a word which sounds very pious, but a word which you can only experience, when your trust in God, when you have no more greed, when you see that there is one hope that will not make you ashamed, you can fight because God is the ultimate victor, the saviour of all men, especially for those who believe.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, who hast in Thy mercy called us to be Thy children, look at the waywardness of Thy children, the total unfaithfulness of Thy children, the stupidity and arrogance of Thy children. O God, grant us the vision of who we are and who Thou art and what thou willest for all men. Grant us Wisdom, grant us humility grant us strength to do Thy will. Train us for the fight, sustain us in the fight. Keep us hopeful in the midst of suffering, through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.*

4. Love And Hatred

Once again, let us quieten our minds before God: *Almighty God, lover of all mankind, giver of Thy son for the life of the world, grant us Thy love that we may live in Thee, that we may bear fruit for Thee, our life and our work may be caught into Thy life and Thy work. Dispel from us all gloom and darkness, all unbelief, all hatred. Make us pure, make us willing to do Thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.*

For our last Bible meditation I have chosen two passages from the New Testament. I shall not speak very long about these passages, but I shall simply read these passages to you and make just a few comments before and after the reading of the passage. The point on

which we want to concentrate this morning is the question of love and hatred. First of all let me say that the issue between violence and non-violence is not a Christian way of stating the problem. The words nonviolence and violence do not occur in the Bible. They are not Biblical categories. I think I can trace the source of this word in our terminology. It comes from my country, from Gandhi. It is the translation of a word in the Hindu Scriptures which Gandhi took to be the equivalent of love. The word is ahimsa, which has a negative meaning. Himsa is doing harm to others and ahimsa is not doing harm to others. It does not speak about violence but doing harm, but the concept of ahimsa is itself very rich in the Hindu scriptures, though when you put it in that negative terminology it does not sound very creative. But that was a word which Gandhi minted for himself, this word non-violence to express the concept of Ahimsa in the Hindu scriptures. Now, the idea of love is perhaps the key Christian idea, it has no parallels either in pagan language or even Jewish language. There is a word..... in Hebrew which comes pretty close to the meaning of agape but it still is not the same, this word into which the New Testament puts so much content is the word we should look at today by just reading the two passages. First passages from St. Paul, the Hymn of love, the very familiar passage in I Corinthians 13. The second passage would come from John's first epistle.

I shall read the hymn of love from Paul, but before I do that I want to set before you the context in which this hymn is put. If you isolate it from its context it does not make itself very clear. If you look at your New Testament you will find that the second part of I Corinthians is a reply from Paul to certain questions raised to him. The Corinthians have obviously written a letter to him saying, "We want your view on the following points," and you can see that if you look in the Bible for instance I Corinthians 7:1 says a particular point on which he is answering. Now concerning this, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1. If you look at those four verses you can see that he is going point by point over the questions that have been raised by the Corinthians in their letter to him. 7:1 says, now concerning the matters about which you wrote, and 8:1 says, now concerning the food offered to idols, and 12:1 says, now concerning spiritual gifts, and 16:1 says, now

concerning the contributions for the saints. These are all points on which the Corinthians had written to Paul asking for his views and what we have in the Epistles is the reply given by St. Paul. Now the Question about the hymn of love is in the context of a particular question which is a very interesting kind of question.

I know how people ask questions. I think the people of Kerala have got many similarities with the people of Corinth. They like asking questions which are very difficult to answer and which will get the man who answers into trouble. One of the questions that have been asked is about the two phenomena of the Spirit. First the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. It made a tremendous impression on the Corinthian Christians. Glossolalia was a phenomenon there. And it was impressive and I don't think we should discount this phenomenon because I think we can observe this phenomenon even today. But it requires a particular type of temperament and personality and the Corinthians by and large had that personality. A very manic kind of personality, a personality which is ecstatic in its basic orientation, which likes to jump and dance and get out of normal consciousness into an ecstatic consciousness where unusual phenomena can occur, and I think they can still occur today. We have become too brain-washed so that we ourselves are not able to get into that ecstatic kind of state, but primitive people who can get into that ecstatic state can still produce these phenomena. What was more interesting to some more intelligent people was the gift of prophecy which was a real gift in the New Testament times. This gift, as I understand it, is the gift in which during church service when the Christians are gathered together, a person gets an inspiration to speak a word about some ethical issue confronted. Most of the New Testament material itself, especially what are known as the ethical passages, the passages which tell you about conduct, have their source in some of the prophetic utterances in the early Church. So the gift of prophecy was something which was more directly relevant and meaningful for many people. It was a direct action of the Spirit in the community of the Church. Now they ask a question "which is the higher gift?" Glossolalia seems more impressive that some people think that it is more important to have the gift of prophecy because there you are

saying something much more meaningful and edifying and St Paul answers this question in no unmistakable terms. He argues that prophecy is superior to glossolalia. He says the criteria by which you measure the various gifts is the degree to which they build up the Body of Christ. To what extent does this gift help you to build the Body of Christ. Not how much it profits the man who gets it but how much it profits the community which it is supposed to serve. Now that is the question on which he gives a very clear answer at the end of chapter 1 Cor. 12.

After having said that prophecy is higher than speaking in tongues, he says: Seek indeed the higher gifts of the Spirits, but there is a way higher than the highest of gifts, For even I can speak in all the tongues of men and of angels, if I do not know love I become a brass, a noisy pair of cymbals. Even if I have the gift of prophecy and know all the mysteries of God and have access to the secret gnosis and have also the faith that moves mountains and still have not love I am a zero. Even if I hand out all I have as done to the poor and am willing to give my body to be burnt in martyrdom and still have not love I am just no good. Love is able to suffer a lot and is still merciful not jealous or resentful. Love does not run around in activities fervour, love is not puffed up with its own importance, love is not ambitious seeking its own profit, love does not lose its temper and go into paroxysm of rage, love does not plan evil, neither is it happy when somebody else does evil, love rejoices with others in the truth, that is when somebody else does good things. Love can take a lot of suffering, love is faithful to all, love always hopes, love sustains all and love survives everything. love does not fail it is never abrogated. Prophecy can be sustained. Speaking in tongues may cease to be as a phenomenon, even secret knowledge can disappear, for all our knowledge and all those prophecies is but partial. But what is full and complete has come, what is partial has no place, when we were babies we had a baby brain and a baby speech and were treated like babies but when we became adults all that babying talk disappear. Even so we are still in the partial the baby stage. What we now see is a reflection of reality as in a mirror, but when the full has come it will be direct face to face vision. As yet our knowledge is partial when the fuller has come our

knowledge also will be full and we shall perceive as clearly as we shall ourselves be perceived. For our present existence there are three things, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these three is love. So strive for love, yearn indeed for the higher gifts of the Spirit and certainly for the gift of prophecy, but strive for love.

Now if I may say so, this is one of the points at which there is both profound depth and the possibility of great misunderstanding. In our dialogue with Marxists, particularly this has come up as a basic issue because this terminology does not belong to the Marxist language. No, and yet you may want to call them revisionists if you like, yet there are people who are intelligent Marxists who have said to me that one of the problems in the Marxist experience is the nemesis of hatred. We create hatred as a weapon against these evil and develop it and build it up and we become rootless in the execution of our revolutionary plans. But when we come victors in the revolution we cannot put aside the hatred that we trained ourselves in.

The Yugoslavian Marxist has put it this way. There seems to be a contradiction between utopia and revolution. Utopia is the thing that you want to achieve, a place where there will be no exploitation, where there will be justice, where men will be good to each other, where there will be unity in the community but at the same time, in order to introduce this utopia of justice, and peace and righteousness, we have to use tools which are quite different from the ones which we will be using in utopia. In utopia we hope that there will be no need of this kind of repression of the oppressed which is necessary in the revolution. So there seems to be a basic contradiction between the techniques of the revolution and the principles governing the utopia which is to be achieved as a consequence of the revolution. So this problem may be a false problem and many Marxists say that is not problem at all, that Marxist ideology is able to take care of this problem that we know that hatred or evil is something which continues with us too, but that we don't need to by any absolute necessity of law, carry over that hatred into the new society that we create and these Marxist friends of mine would say that Stalinism cannot be taken as an illustration of this point because Stalinism was a basic aberration from what is the normal thing. The fact that in Stalinism violence

became entrenched in the society which was created as a result of revolution is not a scientifically correct thing. It is a mistake and, therefore, that there is no such problem, some people say to me. Now I am not qualified in Marxist ideological reasoning to resolve this problem within those ideological terms, but for a Christian the way is that of St. Paul and of St John as you will see in a few minutes.

This love seems so central a principle that we are ourselves up against a problem in the Christians' participation in the revolutionary struggle. On the one hand, there is the demand of justice, on the other hand, there is the demand of love. If there is a conflict between these two, it is a question we still have to reflect on. May I come back to this point after having read another type of approach to the question of love, which comes from John, and John as you know, does not write in this philosophical style of Paul, it has a completely different style, a deceptive simplicity. But behind that simplicity there is a profundity. I have lived for half a century now, and I am just about beginning to peep into a tremendous depth there. I am just about beginning to have a little peep into it, it is so moving, so impressive to me, I don't think I'll be able to communicate it to you today, but let me say the context in which I think the first epistle of John was written before I read this passage so that you can again see the problem. In 90 AD, an important event took place for the life of the Church and for the life of the Jewish nation—the council of Jamnia. The Council of Jamnia is like the Council of Nicaea for the Jews. The council of Jamnia is the one that settled the question of the canon of the Old Testament scripture, but a major decision was made in relation to Christians, by the Jews, that no man can be a member of the Synagogue unless he is willing to anathematize Jesus. In order to be a Jew you have to anathematize Jesus. Now this decision had tremendous consequences. Until that time the distinction between Jews and Christians was not very clear to most people and even in their own conscience they were not thinking of these two as in any sense being mutually exclusive. You could be both a Jew and a Christian. But with this demand that you had to anathematize Jesus in order to be a Jew, a problem of conscience arises for the Christians. Do I want to remain a Jew or do I want to be a Christian? I can't be

both. Now this led to a series of problems in the Christian Church. There was considerable tension within the Christian Church between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians from the beginning, but it came to a head after 90 A. D. And during the persecution of the last decade of the first century we saw a new phenomena. A government was willing to let a Christian go free from persecution if he could prove that he was a Jew. The Jewish religion is a licensed religion, a *religio licita*, whereas Christianity is a religion *illicita*. So if you can prove that you are a Jew you won't be persecuted, when you are arrested by the authorities you can get out of it by proving that you are a Jew. Now this meant that slowly a large number of Jewish Christians began leaving the Christian Church and going back to the Jewish faith. In a very large scale fall away from the Churches in the last decade of the first century back into the Jewish religion. It was in that context that some very great tension arose.

If a Jewish Christian is arrested he would not only prove that he is a Jew, but he would also become an informant about who is a Christian. The government would pump him "if you are a Jew and if you hate the Christians, tell me who the Christians are". And quite often to save one's own skin, one had to betray one's fellow Christians. That is a way of murdering your brother. That is the context in which this passage has to be understood now in John. Now I am beginning at John 2:28.

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him. 31 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3 And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

4 Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. 10 The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.

11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. 16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Chapter 3

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. 15 God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever

fears has not reached perfection in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. 21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

As I said, it is not necessary to go to a great deal of explanation, it is a kind of direct passage. But I want to pick up in my own halting way one or two points from there. One thing St. John makes very clear is that if love is only an emotion in your heart which does not come out in what you do, then it is hypocrisy. And that is the problem of the Christians. Christians claim that they love the poor and make speeches but it does not come out in what they do and when the facts are presented to them in a way which makes it clear to them that they are not loving their brethren by what they do they do not want to face those facts. This is our problem in the Churches. This is the problem which I think both Dag and Abdul pointed out to us. Christians are inhibited from seeing the truth that they are exploiting their brothers and that is the problem of the churches. The moment you raise that problem, they get scared and they resist every attempt to make them see what is there, what if the problem there.

What is the source of this fear of seeing the truth? I suspect that it is that we do not know sufficiently deeply the love of God. If we know the love of God, then this fear will be gone. What I fear is if we face up to the consequences of our knowledge then our whole life will be upset, we can't go on living the way we are living, and that fear is inhibiting the churches. I do not want to say the white churches, our Indian Church also is in the same boat, or the Black Church or any other church. The love that cast out fear has not yet come into the churches. And how do we do it? There is tremendous fear, when I go and talk to the German church leaders, I have a feeling that they are so scared that even listening to me might be dangerous for them. That scare, that fear, that is our problem in our churches. How do we create a pastoral situation in which that fear can be dispelled and people can be empowered to act with a little more freedom. I don't

know, that is our big task. And there I want to say that the churches have failed somewhere along the way in the proclamation of the Gospel to its own members. We have not made it possible for people to be free enough to act in accordance with that they can find out to be the truth. I think telling people about the liberation of Africa, some people respond at it, but most people don't because they sense that if they really respond to it, it will cost them so much. How do we get under that problem? It is a question which really bothers me.

A second problem, and I hope you will do something to discuss that problem at least, we will not always be understood by our non-Christian colleagues in the fullness of our own understanding of reality. We should not expect that. The Christian understanding of reality as such cannot be fully acceptable to the non-Christians. We don't need to expect that. But there is a reverse problem. The Christian does not understand reality quite often as well as the non-Christians. And for me one of the most liberating things that happened to me in my own place, Kerala, India, is the dialogue, the conversations, that I have had with my non-Christian friends. I have learned so much, my own consciousness has been really opened up by these conversations. If I had stayed within the ghetto, my consciousness would have been too narrow and how do you break through that fear, the fear of meeting not only the revolutionary, but your ordinary non-Christian man in your own communities who has got some really important experience to relate to you and who has a different understanding of reality. There, too, fear is the thing that keeps the Church away from dialogue. We are afraid, we say well, if we go and talk to these non-Christians we must be quite sure what our own position is so that there is no compromise made in our position. What are all these statements. These are all expressions of fear, basic fear in relating ourselves to the reality of other human beings. And here again somewhere along the way our Churches have gone basically wrong in this fear of exposure to reality. How do we dispel that?

The third thing and I'll just stop. You cannot really get any action without a measure of hatred. I don't know. I hate to say this but I thought at one time in the World Council, having come out of a kind of secular world into the World Council circles I thought by talking to

each other as nice Christians we could communicate but we can't. Only when you express a notion of basic hatred there begins to be communication. I don't know if that is successful but at least that is the only way you can get something moving and also in our revolutionary struggles if we always keep on saying nice things, nothing happens. But how do I justify that hatred as a Christian? I had two questions in a my mind, one is that in my own case, I should not tell you this, I tried to make my hatred something different from myself as a tool. I have to fight after I go back, after having expressed my hatred, I have to go home and overcome it in my own mind. What does it do to me, I don't know. But without a certain amount of hatred of the oppressor how can you get any action? And how do you, having used that hatred, get rid of it? Because I cannot live with it. Those are the questions I want to raise before you for discussion.

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