

VI WHAT IS "COMING TO FAITH"?

Coming to faith is not viewed in the New Testament as a simple matter of communication and response. There are at least two problems in coming to faith, one of them recognized in the New Testament materials themselves. This is that people have expectations and understandings already in their heads and if what you are seeking to communicate does not fit their expectations, they will not understand or they will misunderstand. Thus communication of anything new or different must engage the listeners in a process of rethinking and new orientation, which process they may reject.

The second is something of which we have been aware, but has now been analyzed by the modern study of personality types and faith development. The different types and processes of individuals will produce different forms of faith and thus there can be no singular expression of faith except in a faith tradition which does not consider or allow the differences of persons.

Communication in Mark 4

A classic passage is Mark 4 and Jesus' treatment of the purpose of speaking in parables. Scholars have puzzled over this passage and have often seen it as the creation of the church. However, it has a logic which can be seen in the context of Jesus' own ministry. Matthew modifies his Markan source here, as often elsewhere, and Matthew's perception of the situation is quite different.

What happens in Mark is this: Jesus is teaching by the sea and speaking in parables. While doing this he tells his listeners the Parable of the Sower, a parable about the problem of hearing and responding. When he is apart with his disciples they ask about the parables which they did not understand. Jesus says to them (my translation):

To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those outside everything is in parables/riddles, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; unless they should turn again and be forgiven.⁶²

Here Jesus uses the word "parable" with the additional meaning of "riddle". Rabbis of Jesus' time liked to tell stories in the form of riddles. The difference between an ordinary parable and a riddle is that with a riddle the point that was being made was not clear, but was to be discovered. Jesus describes his use of parable, as riddle, as intentional so as to limit response to those who have ears to hear: who are willing to accept what he is saying. The reason seems to be, as Paul indicates in I Cor., that what Jesus is saying cuts across all human presuppositions. One only has to examine the parables in Mark 4 to indicate this. No traditional Jew would describe the Kingdom as a farmer sowing seed which grows by a slow process outside the sower's control -- or a mustard seed which is the smallest of seeds. Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of God was mysteriously present while the world went on as usual, not in some cataclysmic event of the future which would immediately transform everything.

Jesus' hesitation to speak openly, without parable, is part of the Messianic secret. He did not want persons to respond to him who could not share his perspective, who would not "turn again". His parables would puzzle and intrigue, and if they could come to his perspective they would understand.

Verses 11 and 12 quote Isaiah 6:9-10. This is one of the most frequently quoted Old Testament verses in the New Testament. One finds it also in: Matt. 13:14-15 and Luke 8:10 (passages parallel to Mark 4), John 12:40, Acts 28:26-27. In Mark these verses from Isaiah come from the Hebrew or an Aramaic

⁶². This translation is faithful to the original, choosing the word "mystery" for the Greek "mysterion" rather than "secret" and understanding the "mepote" of vs. 12 in terms of the possible Aramaic original, thus translating it "unless" rather than "lest". Thus Jesus does not use parables to prevent understanding, but to limit understanding to the one who "turns".

Targum (translation) and carry some of the theology of Isaiah which sees Isaiah as carrying a message which will harden hearts and blind sight. God has passed a sentence of blindness upon the people. The Septuagint (Greek OT) changes the theology of the Hebrew and assigns the responsibility for lack of response to the people rather than God. Matthew, in using Mark 4, diminishes the quotation from the Hebrew and adds a longer quote from the Septuagint because he prefers its theology. In Acts 28, Isaiah 6 is used to indicate the lack of Jewish response to Paul's mission, supplying reason for turning to the Gentiles. In John 12 it is also used to explain the lack of Jewish response.

Paul in Romans 9-11 and I Cor. 1

In Romans 9-11 Paul personally struggles with the lack of Jewish response to the Gospel and decides paradoxically that it is both the fault of the Jews and God's plan. By the Jewish rejection the Gospel is forced beyond Judaism to the Gentile world. When the Gentiles have responded, Israel will become jealous and respond -- and then the end will come. God thus consigns all to disobedience, Jews and Gentiles, so that he might have mercy on all.

What this means is that the problem of coming to faith is an ancient one. As the church deals with the evangelistic task it must not forget that communicating the Gospel has always been difficult. As Paul indicates in I Cor. 1, it is not quite the way anyone would have wanted it. It is only our optimistic Luke that in Acts gives the impression that the church is on a march into the Gentile world with the power of the Spirit, a power that will overcome all obstacles. He also teases us with records of amazing mass conversions in Jerusalem, so that we feel that if we only have faith and Spirit as did the Jerusalem church, look what we could do!

Why then is coming to faith so difficult? We have already spoken of the way in which the Gospel differs from human expectation. Paul's treatment of the human desire for sign and wisdom in I Cor. 1 is informative. The natural human desire is for religion that will solve life's problems and can be grasped by human understanding. Thus the nature of the Gospel is a "stumbling stone", to use Paul's term which he borrows from Isaiah. Another problem is the Law-Grace issue. This is not merely an issue in the conflict of early Christianity with first century Judaism. It represents a broad-based human issue. Almost everywhere, from child-rearing to industry, and certainly in educational systems, one is of value in terms of what one can produce and how one can satisfy those in authority. The pressures for accomplishment and compliance are at times relentless. We proudly say that such pressure and competition keep our economy going and produce excellence, but they also crush. How can a Gospel of grace and acceptance, proclaiming human value beyond accomplishment, be affirmed in a world where one seldom experiences this. One does not have to do much therapy before becoming aware that at the basis of many human problems is the absence of the experience of receiving and being allowed to give love. Receiving love is being valued as one is. Giving love and having it be received is even more important, because through this one is allowed to give oneself and experiences oneself as being worthy to be received. This is what happens with God. God both loves us and allows us to love back, and thus we are truly accepted. This is grace.

Faith Development

Faith also has other complications. Modern studies of faith approach it from a number of perspectives. Through the use of Jungian insights into personality types, as reflected in the Myers-Briggs Indicator, it becomes clear that one's preference for introversion-extroversion, one's ways of perception and thinking, one's preference for structured or spontaneous approaches to life, all affect the way one comes to faith. Helpful here is *From Image to Likeness: A Jungian Path in the Gospel Journey*, by W. Harold Grant, Magdala Thompson, and Thomas E. Clark.⁶³

⁶³ . W. Harold Grant, Magdala Thompson, Thomas E. Clark, *From Image to Likeness: A Jungian Path in the Gospel Journey*, NY: Paulist Press, 1983.

In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion of "faith development" and this most directly impinges on evangelism and caring for the faith of the Christian community. It means that persons are not all at the same place in their faith journey and that the Christian community in dealing with persons must be able to address faith at different stages and expressing different issues. It needs to regard changing faith as normal and unfaith as part of the process of faith.

There is a variety of literature, such as that of James Fowler, Neil Q. Hamilton, and James and Evelyn Whitehead.⁶⁴ Fowler uses the structural paradigm of Piaget and Kohlberg, understanding faith from the perspective of the developing mental structures by which one can have faith. Thus development is seen as follows (I am simplifying the stages and not using all of Fowler's terminology): faith intuited from family, then conventional faith (that of one's religious community), then individualized faith (which implies a critical appropriation of one's tradition). The final stage is universalizing faith, faith which appreciates the spiritual experience in other traditions. Thus faith broadens as life experience affects mental structures and causes one to see things differently. Some religious communities do not give permission for development beyond conventional faith. Universalizing faith would also be a problem to those who regard their tradition as exclusively having truth.

The Whiteheads use the model of Erikson who views development from a psychosocial perspective. The different stages of development present one with the task of resolving favorably the tension between opposing attitudes: trust-mistrust, autonomy-shame and doubt, initiative-guilt, industry-inferiority, identity-identity confusion, intimacy-isolation, generativity-stagnation, ego integrity-despair. Though one is confronted with these by life at certain stages of development, they remain as life issues. The point is that the focus and content of faith, the way we draw from the faith tradition, are affected by the issues with which we are dealing. Thus faith is not always the same for everyone.⁶⁵

Ultimately coming to faith is a unique process for each individual and this uniqueness must be respected. That is the only way that faith is ultimately both the gift of God and one's own. Otherwise it is merely acceptance of what others say is true. Biblically faith as an individual process is supported by Paul's treatment of spiritual gifts, and functions related to those gifts, portrayed in I Cor. 12 and Rom. 12. They are given by the same Spirit, serve the same Lord, inspired by the same God, but there are varieties. The forcing of faith may be compared to spiritual rape. One of the consequences of the cross as the demonstration of God's love and Jesus' concept of the mission of the "servant" is that God is experienced as "gentle" and patient. One must see this clearly to avoid being taken in by NT apocalyptic materials which still describe the eschaton in terms of God's wrath and impatience.

⁶⁴ . James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, NY: Harper and Row, 1981, and *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Phila.: Fortress, 1987; Neil Q. Hamilton, *Maturing In the Christian Life: A Pastor's Guide*, Phila.: Geneva Press, 1984; James and Evelyn Whitehead, *Christian Life Patterns*, NY: Doubleday, 1979.

⁶⁵ . See the Appendix on Faith Development at the end of this paper.

VI EVANGELISM AND EVIL

It is clear in human experience of the Transcendent that there is also an experience of the malevolent. One of the major issues in religion and philosophy has been how to explain this. In the mythology of the ancient world this was explained *polytheistically*. In other words, there were many gods and goddesses, initially patterned after the observations of natural forces, who were often neither good or bad but exhibited the same ambivalence and complexity as humans. Thus the evil which happened in the world could be interpreted as due to their caprice or hostility. In ancient Persian religion this came to be interpreted *dualistically*, that is, there were coexistent forces of good and evil. Most of the Old Testament, before the influence of dualism on Judaism, interpreted good and evil *monistically*: they understood that this was all due to the one God who was sovereign over all. This meant that the occurrence of good and evil was moralized: suffering, tragedy and evil only happen when one deserves it and are then the punishment of a just God. Today evil is often interpreted *psychologically*: it is due to the dynamics within the human psyche. Jung was an advocate of this, expressing deep concern that if humankind did not come to terms with the unconscious forces of the psyche it would be on the brink of nuclear annihilation.

I would like to explore the insights of Judaism and early Christianity and those of contemporary psychology. I believe that both have something significant to tell us. We cannot deal with evangelism, calling persons to God, without dealing with calling persons to turn from evil without and within the human psyche.

Judaism and Early Christianity

In the Judaism of the Intertestamental Period there developed a *modified dualism*, a dualism which did not see good and evil as co-eternal or absolute, but evil came into being as a result of a "fall" and was a lesser power than God. Thus the outcome of the struggle between God and evil was never in doubt.

In Jewish Apocalyptic the figure of the Devil, or Satan, clearly emerges; no longer God's district attorney as in Job, but now fallen and opposed to God. The condition of this world represents the way in which the Devil has exercised his power, now being ruler of this world. There is also the demonic at his disposal. The mythology of Genesis 6 (the fall of the angels) provided background for understanding the world this way, and the experience of Post-Exilic Judaism provided the raw stuff of human experience which made it believable. God was sovereign in heaven, above history, but not within this world which God had yet to wrest from the power of Satan. The exorcisms in the Gospels presuppose this. Both human illness and natural catastrophe were often understood as due to demonic origin. Even human nature was understood dualistically. Rabbinic psychology spoke of a good and an evil impulse within a person, while Apocalyptic psychology saw little good in human flesh (note Paul's description of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5). The fleshly body was viewed as being inadequate to resurrection existence, and so the resurrection would provide one with a spiritual body, like that of the angels, to take the place of the problematic fleshly body which by itself could produce little good. Spirit and flesh were opposed to each other.

Somewhat similar to the gods of the ancient mythologies were the principalities, powers, elemental spirits, etc., mentioned in the New Testament. Frequently identified with the astral powers, they were essentially neutral, but often ignorant of the purposes of the cosmos and the intent of God. They represent cosmic, natural, historical and political forces. Paul says in I Cor. 2:6ff that the rulers of this age would not have crucified the Lord of glory if they had understood what God was doing in him. To speak about these powers is to recognize that political, cultural, and natural structures are needed for human existence. In Galatians 4:3 they are the custodians of humanity, along with the Law. They make their contribution though they may also be destructive.

Much of what was expressed in the biblical materials about the nature of our world and the causes of what we experience has naturally become a part of the Christian traditions which also sought to interpret life experience. Since the biblical tradition represents such a long history with varied approaches to the nature of human experience, and evil, it is no accident that Christian opinions are varied. Sometimes persons even hold views that are seemingly contradictory because rooted in different parts of the biblical tradition: e.g. that there is a moral nature to suffering (if it comes, there must be a reason), which is an Old Testament view, and that Christ seeks to be sovereign over the evil powers of this world (which means that the world does not reflect God's will and purposes), something strongly reflected in the New Testament.

Though I have difficulty with a dualistic view of life which divides life into the oppositional forces of God and evil, God and world, flesh and spirit, I do believe that Judaism and early Christianity had a significant insight into reality when they saw evil as a real force and presence within the world. I also believe that the ancient world provided a significant paradigm when it animized the structures of state, economy, culture, nature, and stars. To me this means that these structures operate *as if* they had a life of their own. One only has to look at certain political systems or international corporations to understand how the life of the system affects and fates the lives of individuals involved in them. Thus evangelism in the world confronts the structures of the world, the neutral systems, and confronts ontological evil itself which may or may not infect the world structures. We cannot live without these world structures, but they may come to serve the wrong lord (Satan) especially since we cannot in a pluralistic society call the state and economy to obedience of God. One of the great challenges to today's religious traditions is to discover ways to influence social, economic, and political systems and establish shared values. This is an area for interfaith responsibility.

There are a number of recent books which provide helpful approaches to the understanding of evil. M. Scott Peck's *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*; John A. Sanford's *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, and Carl G. Jung's *Answer to Job* provide primarily a psychological approach. Gerald G. May's *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, provides a mystical approach to ontological evil. Although May's title does not focus on evil itself, he devotes two important chapters to it.⁶⁶

Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*

Peck seeks to develop a "psychology of evil" and describes a "personality disorder" characteristic of those persons whom in his practice he experienced as evil:

- a) consistent destructive, scapegoating behavior, which may often be quite subtle.
- b) excessive, albeit usually covert, intolerance to criticism and other forms of narcissistic injury.
- c) pronounced concern with a public image and self-image of respectability, contributing to a stability of life-style but also to pretentiousness and denial of hateful feelings or vengeful motives.
- d) intellectual deviousness, with an increased likelihood of a mild schizophreniclike disturbance of thinking at times of stress.⁶⁷

Peck sees narcissism as a crucial issue which, though in some respects a normal aspect of human development, may become "malignant", as Erich Fromm terms it. He calls attention to Fromm's description of good and evil as a continuum affected by our choices:

⁶⁶ M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, Simon and Schuster, 1983. John A. Sanford, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, Crossroad, 1984. Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job*. transl. by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. Gerald G. May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982.

⁶⁷ M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*, p. 129. It would be interesting to compare the description of this "personality disorder" with the "works of the flesh" in Gal. 5.

Our capacity to choose changes constantly with our practice of life. The longer we continue to make the wrong decisions, the more our heart hardens; the more often we make the right decision, the more our heart softens -- or better perhaps, comes alive. ... Each step in life which increases my self-confidence, my integrity, my courage, my conviction also increases my capacity to choose the desirable alternative, until eventually it becomes more difficult for me to choose the undesirable rather than the desirable action. On the other hand, each act of surrender and cowardice weakens me, opens the path for more acts of surrender, and eventually freedom is lost. Between the extreme when I can no longer do a wrong act and the extreme when I have lost my freedom to right action, there are innumerable degrees of freedom of choice. In the practice of life the degree of freedom to choose is different at any given moment. If the degree of freedom to choose the good is great, it needs less effort to choose the good. If it is small, it takes a great effort, help from others, and favorable circumstances.... Most people fail in the art of living not because they are inherently bad or so without will that they cannot lead a better life; they fail because they do not wake up and see when they stand at a fork in the road and have to decide. They are not aware when life asks them a question, and when they still have alternative answers. Then with each step along the wrong road it becomes increasingly difficult for them to admit that they *are* on the wrong road, often only because they have to admit that they must go back to the first wrong turn, and must accept the fact that they have wasted energy and time.⁶⁸

Peck also discusses the possible origin of evil beyond the human psyche in a chapter entitled "Of Possession and Exorcism".⁶⁹ He mentions his experience with two persons he believes were possessed and discusses their exorcism. He relates his treatment of cosmological evil to psychological evil through the term "Father of Lies" as descriptive of Satan. He laments the resistance of the church to dealing with this area and suggests the need for a data bank and study center to explore the nature of experience in possession and exorcism.

Peck's sixth chapter is on "Mylai: An Examination of Group Evil," a helpful exploration not only of the Viet Nam experience, but of what happens in groups, institutions and nations. He treats this in relation to the problem of specialization (which removes individuals from total responsibility), the effects of stress (which produces regression and psychic numbing) and group dynamics (which make the individual dependent and subordinate to the self-interest/narcissism of the group. Peck asserts that "The effort to prevent group evil -- including war -- must therefore be directed toward the individual." Children need to be taught that "laziness and narcissism are at the root of all human evil."⁷⁰

Peck's thesis regarding the various types of evil with which he deals is that whereas most people will try to avoid pain and attempt to escape legitimate suffering, the evil try to escape a particular type of suffering: "the pain of their own conscience, the pain of the realization of their own sinfulness and imperfection." "The problem is not a defect of conscience but the effort to deny the conscience its due. We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves."⁷¹ Thus evil in humans is identified by "people of the lie" and cosmological evil is identified as the "father of lies". Peck probably does not adequately deal with the social reasons for the dulling of conscience (though it is treated in his case studies) and the need for love and support so that people can deal with the pain of conscience (though this is implied in his treatment of the need for the presence of loving persons at the exorcisms he presents). He also does not deal with the distortions of conscience created by some approaches within Christianity which make dealing with conscience painful beyond toleration and force persons to the lie.

⁶⁸. Ibid., pp. 81-82, quoting from Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*.

⁶⁹. Ibid., pp. 182 ff.

⁷⁰. Ibid., pp. 252-253.

⁷¹. Ibid., pp. 77, 76.

John A. Sanford, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality, and Jung's Answer to Job*

John Sanford, a Jungian analyst and Episcopal priest, treats evil as "The Shadow Side of Reality," the "dark side" of the psyche. Because he uses a Jungian paradigm, the views of Carl Jung will also be discussed, especially his significant treatment of evil in *Answer to Job*.

In Jungian psychology the Shadow is that part of the psyche which is unconscious or repressed for the sake of the ideals of the ego and therefore functions autonomously, on its own, without the awareness of consciousness or integration into it. It is regarded as an Archetype, as it is present in the subconscious of all persons. Persons frequently treat it with denial and projection, especially if societal and religious values make it unacceptable. It is a continuing part of the psyche, though the person who is in a healthy process of growth is involved in seeking to allow elements of it to become conscious and be integrated. As integrated, its dynamics are then at the service of the Self.

Jung's criticism of the Christian doctrine of *privatio boni* (evil as the absence of good, as not having substance in itself) was that it regarded evil as not existing in itself, but only being a diminution or deprivation of the good.⁷² Jung wanted to affirm evil, or the shadow side of existence, as a permanent and natural part of human existence. One of Jung's criticisms of traditional ideas of Christ and God was that no provision was made for their Shadow and thus Christ was deprived of becoming a full paradigm of the human Self.⁷³ In his *Answer to Job* Jung points out the consequences of regarding God as light alone in the Johannine literature where the Shadow of the writer lurks beneath the pages of the book of Revelation.⁷⁴ Jung, in his biblical exegesis, sees the history of God as a process of God coming to consciousness of his Shadow, and doing so in confrontation with Job who becomes conscious of God's dark side. As God becomes conscious of his Shadow, Wisdom (*Sophia*) emerges in Jewish tradition, in a sense the feminine side of God, which finds its full expression in the developing role of Mary in the New Testament. Jung says:

There must be some dire necessity responsible for this anamnesis of Sophia: things simply could not go on as before, the "just" God could not go on committing injustices, and the "Omniscient" could not behave any longer like a clueless and thoughtless human being. Self-reflection becomes an imperative necessity, and for this Wisdom is needed. Yahweh has to remember his absolute knowledge; for, if Job gains knowledge of God, then God must also learn to know himself. It just could not be that Yahweh's dual nature should become public property and remain hidden from himself alone. Whoever knows God has an effect on him. The failure of the attempt to corrupt Job has changed Yahweh's nature.⁷⁵

The history of this change in God is then "reconstructed" from the biblical materials.⁷⁶ It is important to keep in mind what Jung means when he says "God", otherwise one will misunderstand and may for this reason reject Jung's significant insights. What is the story of God's becoming self-conscious, aware of God's dark side, is really the story of the archetypal or collective human soul. Thus his treatment of Judaeo-Christian history, literature and dogma, is really a treatment of the archetypal complexes of the Judaeo-Christian soul. Though Jung's personal experience seems to bear witness to the God outside the soul, how these archetypes relate to the God outside the soul one cannot say when working within the limitations of science:

⁷² The prevalent view of evil in the church from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Platonism, was that God was the truest Being and source of all perfection. Evil is absolute imperfection, has no being, and therefore does not exist.

⁷³ Jung said that since the Incarnation was really incomplete in Christ, separated from real humanity by the Virgin Birth, it remained to be complete in the entry of the Spirit into the lives of those who were fully human. Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, transl. by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, pp. 67-70

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 73ff.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 29 ff.

It is only through the psyche that we can establish that God acts upon us, but we are unable to distinguish whether these actions emanate from God or from the unconscious. We cannot tell whether God and the unconscious are two different entities. Both are border-line concepts for transcendental contents. But empirically it can be established, with a sufficient degree of probability, that there is in the unconscious an archetype of wholeness which manifests itself spontaneously in dreams, etc., and a tendency, independent of the conscious will, to relate other archetypes to this centre.⁷⁷

Sanford's book presents much helpful material on the problem of evil in mythology, the biblical material, post-biblical mythology and folklore, approaching this through the paradigm of Jungian psychology. He includes an extended interpretation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This alone makes the book worth reading. Sanford tries to retain and reinterpret the doctrine of the *privatio boni*, providing an extended critique of Jung's objections to it, arguing that it does not deny the reality of evil.⁷⁸

But Jung's concerns must be clearly heard. Though Jung is ambiguous on some of his statements, his argument was that humans must come to terms with evil as a part of existence, as a part of the psyche, and that its dynamics can be changed by making it conscious. Jung says:

The difference between the "natural" individuation process, which runs its course unconsciously, and the one which is consciously realized, is tremendous. In the first case consciousness nowhere intervenes; the end remains as dark as the beginning. In the second case so much darkness comes to light that the personality is permeated with light, and consciousness necessarily gains in scope and insight. The encounter between conscious and unconscious has to ensure that the light which shines in the darkness is not only comprehended by the darkness, but comprehends it. The *filius solis et lunae* is the symbol of the union of opposites as well as the catalyst of their union. It is the alpha and omega of the process, the mediator and intermedius. "It has a thousand names," say the alchemists, meaning that the source from which the individuation process rises and the goal towards which it aims is nameless, ineffable.⁷⁹

Jung's understanding of the mythology of the "devil" is that, as with "God", it also describes the drama of the psyche:

The question we are confronted with here is the independent position of a creature endowed with autonomy and eternity: the fallen angel. He is the fourth, "recalcitrant" figure in our symbolical series ... Just as, in the Timaeus, the adversary is the second half of the second pair of opposites, without whom the world-soul would not be whole and complete, so, too, the devil must be added to the *trias* as *to en tetartion* (the One as the Fourth), in order to make it a totality ... Through the intervention of the Holy Ghost, however, man is included in the divine process, and this means that the principle of separateness and autonomy over against God -- which is personified in Lucifer as the God-opposing will -- is included in it too. But for this will there would have been no creation and no work of salvation either. The shadow and the opposing will are the necessary conditions for all actualization. An object that has no will of its own, capable, if need be, of opposing its creator, and with no qualities other than its creator's, such an object has no independent existence and is incapable of ethical decision. At best it is just a piece of clockwork which the Creator has to wind up to make it function. Therefore, Lucifer was perhaps the one who best understood the divine will struggling to create a world and who carried out that will most faithfully. For, by rebelling against God, he became the

⁷⁷. Ibid., pp. 106-107.

⁷⁸. Sanford, pp. 140-150.

⁷⁹. Jung, *Answer to Job*, p. 106. The individuation process is Jung's term for the human developmental process which has as a major goal the integration of elements of the psyche and particularly the bringing to consciousness of what is unconscious.

active principle of a creation which opposed to God a counter-will of its own. Because God willed this, we are told in Genesis 3 that he gave man the power to will otherwise. Had he not done so, he would have created nothing but a machine, and then the incarnation and the redemption would never have come about.⁸⁰

The contribution of these psychological studies is important because they help us to look at the problem of evil and its relationship to the human psyche with fresh vision and new empirical evidence, not merely as a theological discussion held within the walls of the assumptions of Christian tradition and theology.

One of Peck's contributions is the way in which narcissism and avoidance of suffering related to conscience, produces "people of the lie" who function in evil ways -- actually describing this as a "personality disorder." His treatment of the experience of possession and exorcism is a valuable contribution to an area frequently shunned by clergy and counselors with a purely psychological mind-set. It might be suggested that his desire to collect empirical evidence on possession should establish contact with specialists in multiple personality, some of whom assert that they have never found a "demon" who could not be dealt with by ordinary psychological means. One psychiatrist I know says that he has seen things as bad as in *The Exorcist*.

The particular contribution of Jungian psychology is that what often emerges as evil from the psyche acts this way because it has not been integrated into the Self and has not been raised to consciousness. Thus it operates without the balance which comes from being a part of the whole person. When integrated it lends its energy to the healthy functioning of the person and in the struggle for integration it creates dynamics for the growth process. If Jung is right, then Christian rejection of the flesh and the unconscious together with unreal perfectionist ideals do not produce real righteousness, but a false righteousness with the Shadow lurking in the unconscious, to attack where and when it is given permission, wherever anger and violence may be considered appropriate and sexuality may be hidden. In Jung's individuation process, for the integration of the Shadow into the Self, one must accept, and then transform, what is unacceptable and "sinful".

It should be recognized that to talk about psychological insights into the nature of human evil is not a new thing, for there have always been psychological insights into the functioning of the human inner life, a number of which are reflected in the biblical material: e.g., the Pharisees' understanding of the evil and good impulse within a person. The biblical insights may be helpful, but one still must consider whether the biblical views of the psyche must bear the burden of ultimate truth or whether they may be qualified by or exchanged for insights of more recent psychology. There is some possibility of indicating that Jesus did not buy into the approaches to the inner life of persons which in the early church moved in dualistic directions. John Sanford presents an interesting study of Jesus in Jungian terms in *The Kingdom Within: The Inner Meaning of Jesus' Sayings*.⁸¹ Jesus fought the moralistic legalism and suppression of feelings characteristic of the Pharisees and seems to have been able to accept persons in his society who represented "unacceptable feelings" --- and he exemplifies many of the Jungian aspects of human wholeness. Yet the attempt to enter into the mind of Jesus has to answer to the canons of the historical critical study of the Gospels.

Gerald May, *Will and Spirit*

Gerald May's approach in *Will and Spirit* is contemplative. He understands "willingness", in contrast to "willfulness" (the attempt to control), as central in dealing with the psyche and in surrendering to the Transcendent mystery that gives human existence meaning. The question of evil is raised in the context of surrendering oneself to the mystery which one encounters in contemplation. May describes the issue:

⁸⁰. Sanford, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, pp. 150-151, quote from C. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, Pantheon Books, 1963.

⁸¹. John Sanford, *The Kingdom Within: The Inner Meaning of Jesus' Sayings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1970.

Thus, although willingness and self-surrender are imperative in the search for our true nature and although ultimately they must be absolute and must consist of a realization of "not-knowing," *they cannot be blind*. What is called for here is a way of seeing clearly and precisely without having to understand or comprehend, a way of *perceiving* accurately with all one's faculties that does not in the process lead us into believing we are our own masters.⁸²

May distinguishes *sin* and *evil* by indicating that *sin* is a *condition*, primarily the willful approach to life, while *evil* is a *force* or energy that gives impetus to willfulness and compels us away from realizing union with God. He comments that contemplative authors seem to deal with *evil* primarily in ways to avoid its influence, rather than trying to explain it or reflect on it.⁸³ In a way this is to be expected, because contemplative writers shrink from trying to define ultimate reality, for definition is a way of distancing oneself from it.⁸⁴

A particular difficulty is that for contemplatives the "unitive" experience of the mystery of reality is central.

We have proposed that all polarities, including the problem of good and evil, exist only as a direct consequence of dualistic thinking. During unitive experiences no dichotomies are made between good and evil, light and dark, creation and destruction, this and that, me and it. The world, and all within it, are One, and this One is not even labeled, for to do so would separate it from "two or "many". It is the absence of dualistic distinction that makes unitive experience so difficult to talk about and impossible to understand, for both language and understanding are dualistic vehicles. In union, all is One, one is All, and this All/One is given completely in every timeless moment.⁸⁵

May argues that contemplatives need to deal with duality and speaks about how avoidance of duality may be used to avoid psychological distress and the problem of good and evil. He advises "ambivalence:

... *ambi*, meaning "both", and *valens*, meaning "to value" or be strongly affected by. To value and be strongly affected by both "realities" can result in wholeness and a goodly measure of peace if one is only willing to allow the dichotomy to exist without trying to solve it. It is possible for the paradox to be embraced without being resolved. The fifteenth-century Nicholas of Cusa said, "And I have learnt that the place wherein Thou art found unveiled is girt round with the coincidence of contradictories, and this is the wall of Paradise wherein Thou dost abide."⁸⁶

If the ambiguity can be accepted, what does one then do in the contemplative encounter with evil? How does one know what one is surrendering to? May suggests that the only way out is to trust the God in the mystery.

In this trust, one is forced into "the fundamental contemplative statement concerning good, evil, and God" which expresses the contemplative "leap of faith":

I DO NOT KNOW. I do not know what is ultimately good or evil, nor even what is real or unreal. But I do know that there is no way I can proceed upon my own personal resources. In this as in all things, I am utterly and irrevocably dependent upon a Power that I can in no way objectify. I call this Power God, and God is beyond my understanding, beyond good and evil, beyond doubt and trust, beyond even life and death. God's love and power and Spirit exist in

⁸². Gerald May, *Will and Spirit*, p. 245. See the discussion of May's views in the chapter in this book on Psychological Models.

⁸³. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁸⁴. *Ibid.*, pp. 245f.

⁸⁵. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁸⁶. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

me, through me, and in all creatures. But God is unimaginably BEYOND all this as well. I also know that in my heart I wish to do and be what God would desire of me. Therefore, in humility and fear, I give myself. I commit my soul to God, the One Almighty Creator, the Ultimate Source of reality. Good or bad, right or wrong, these things are beyond me. I love, but I do not know. I live and act and decide between this and that as best I can, but ultimately, I do not know. And thus I say, in the burning vibrancy of Your Love and Terror, THY WILL BE DONE.⁸⁷

In the contemplative traditions of East and West there has been an emphasis on spiritual warfare with evil. However, May feels that this is dangerous not only because the forces with which one battles may be overpowering, but "because of the immense narcissistic opportunities available in such an identification."⁸⁸ He goes on to say that the "spiritual assertiveness" which has a legitimate place in the "outside world" is "the simplicity of doing what is needed."

In the "inner" world of one's own mind and heart, when encountering an evil inclination or a questionable force, the most ideal form of this spiritual assertiveness is the advice we have encountered earlier: The best response is no response. Asked how to deal with visions and influences encountered in quiet prayer and meditation, the Desert Father Evagrius advised only "*apatheia* and short, intense prayer." The *apatheia* prevented fascination and undue self-importance, and the short prayer acknowledged one's dependency on God for guidance, protection, and everything else in life. It is important to understand here that "not paying attention" does not mean dulling or blinding oneself to the point of being unaware. In fact the opposite is true. Paradoxically, "not paying attention" constitutes a panoramic vigilance that sees all things with the same clarity and does not distinguish "exciting," "fearful," or "significant" phenomena from anything else. In other words, voices, visions, strange sensations, feelings of evil, and the like should be noticed along with everything else but not identified as special. Most importantly, none of these things should sidetrack one's attention.⁸⁹

This means that avoiding fascination and attachment is not only a way of dealing with life in general for the contemplative, but also an important way of dealing with evil. It is not our role to be "vanquishers of evil." The vanquishing of evil is God's concern, ours is to surrender to God, be willing to go where God leads, and to have a radical trust in God's power to keep us.⁹⁰

Though in graced moments of silence the above may be so, in daily life we must also

... stand up and act. We must dive into the world of dualities and attachments in which we are thrust and pulled and tricked, a world in which we must evaluate and decide and commit and struggle. And then, no matter how experienced we are, we lose some of our simplicity. Countless dualities besiege us ...⁹¹

Here all of the contemplative traditions advocate "discernment", to seek to understand the directions in which the forces of life lead. The Ignatian method of discernment is an analytical approach and the most popular. Others are more simple, advocating a sense of what produces peace, humility, love, or simplicity and what produced distress, willfulness, animosity or confusion. Sometimes discernment involves relationship with a spiritual friend or guide.

For many an understanding of what May is saying will necessitate a reversal of the analytical, objective, dualistic Western perspective, but it is well worth heeding. Deal with evil we must, but can it only be

⁸⁷. Ibid., p 227.

⁸⁸. Ibid., p. 279

⁸⁹. Ibid., pp. 280-281.

⁹⁰. Ibid., p. 283.

⁹¹. Ibid., p. 288.

dealt with by our aggressive attempts to control our world and ourselves? Beyond the world in which we live which objectifies and separates realities, there is a more basic reality from which we gain our existence and our meaning. Even though evil is here also, we must trust the Mystery we encounter so that this "rootedness" may guide as we act in our world.

Personal Comments on Evil

This writer is coming more and more to the conviction that there are both psychological and ontological/transcendent elements to the human experience of evil. The persistence of evil within the world, and those occasions when it seems to structure itself into societies, programs, movements, or institutions, would point towards elements which transcend the human. In working with troubled persons one often encounters dynamics whose strength and persistence are difficult to explain merely in terms of personal history or bio-chemical malfunction. In multiple personalities one frequently encounters evil persons often bent upon the destruction of the others. Such a person may be the introjection of a malevolent person from experience, functioning as an autonomous part of the psyche, which may be treated by psychotherapeutic means. And yet at times this seems to be more than an aspect of the psyche.

As Christians we affirm the reality of God's spiritual world and the reality of the human soul. It is not really such a long step to affirm the reality of other spiritual powers, something that was part of the Christian perception of the world before modern science depopulated the spiritual world. One thing science has done for us is to explore the way the natural world functions. Historical and sociological studies have helped us to understand the social and political factors of historical experience. Thus it is right that we do not understand storms, earthquakes, famines or political conflict in transcendent terms. Even the human process has been explored biologically, psychologically, sociologically, with real benefit. However, when one comes to persons and all those structures and institutions in which humanity is involved, one begins to discover the possibility of transcendent spiritual forces at work. The way in which the spiritual world may impinge upon the human world is through the human psyche/mind. Modern studies in ESP have indicated an extra sensory dimension to human communication and perception.

I would like to suggest that though some affect of spirit upon *matter* may be possible,⁹² the primary affect of the spiritual world upon our world is through *persons*.⁹³ This would mean that *both* God and the demonic affect the world primarily through persons. The confusing thing is that there are so many possibilities for the explanation of human experience and action that what happens in some persons may be merely be explained as a personality disorder. Yet I believe that it is through our disorders and human difficulties, though our anger and selfishness, through the very biological needs that are necessary for life, that the demonic can work its will. This does not mean that our humanity is evil, but that the problems of our human existence can provide occasion for the work of God or the demonic, as can the societal and cultural distortions of human existence.

There are those times in the experience of life when evil seems to do too much, when there is too much tragedy and human suffering, when a sequence of events seems to be without explanation unless one assigns to it some intent, when the persistence of destructive dynamics in persons cannot be understood without explaining that the personal dynamics plus something else is present. Then, as there are moments in life when we experience God, we may find ourselves experiencing the Evil One. Like our God experiences, these experiences of Evil may later seem unreal, but perhaps we must cling to them as glimpses into the nature of existence which help us to deal with life in all of its dimensions. The recognition of Evil is not a cause for despair, for it was there before it was seen. Actually its disclosure causes it to lose its power. It functions most effectively when it is unrecognized and while operating autonomously within the psyche suggests to one courses of action that one identifies as coming from oneself. When it is unrecognized we become its victims operating from dynamics akin to post-hypnotic suggestion.

⁹². There has been a great deal of research in psychokinesis, the effect of mind on matter, which could be supportive of this.

⁹³. See a further discussion of this in the section on "The Four Worlds of the Person" in the chapter on psychological models.

It is important for those going into religious professions, and all those deeply committed to God, to be aware that you are a prime target for Evil. Evil usually bothers only with those who are God's and therefore a threat, or those whose destructive dynamics can be significantly used. As servants of God, *you must know your vulnerabilities and seek to be conscious of your issues*, for that is where Evil will attack you. There is a clear perception within mysticism that as spiritual life grows so does the struggle with Evil and one's humanity.

You must also recognize that Evil will attack not only you, but those dear to you. This is really where you are most vulnerable. This is not something to fear, but to recognize, providing spiritual protection for your family. The New Testament message is about a Christ who subdues the cosmic powers (Col. 2:15). Ephesians 6:10 speaks of putting on the "whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." God is a primary participant in life and history. Paul was clear in Rom. 8 that this did not guarantee protection from everything. However, one was secure in the love of God whatever life would bring.

When you are aware, you can recognize and deal with Evil, and it is much less dangerous. Unfortunately, there is no life without danger and risk, and this applies not only to the possibility of Evil, but life in general. Life is only what it is and we have no other life now than this life. To pretend it is different will make it no different. When I shared this with someone who has been through a great deal of the darkness in recent European history, he said "But when there is so much darkness, you must look at the light." This is also true.

Evil and Evangelism

Evangelism is proclaiming the Good News of God's desire to draw humans into relationship, with all that that means in terms of human and social transformation. If evil is real it will infect both humans and societal structures and use them. It will also prevent the possibility of persons coming to God. Whatever the need for the Christian message, there is someone out there who does not want it heard and responded to. There is someone who would destroy the humanity which God loves and has created and for whom Christ died. Certainly one should deal with the psychological dynamics which produce "evil" behavior. However, as portrayed in the Gospels, there is a real sense in which the proclamation of the Christian message is an attack against Satan's kingdom.

To me this means:

- 1) The one committed to God and the proclamation of the Gospel must realize that he/she is a special target of Satan, as indicated above, and seek both God's protection and the ability to discern the motivation for actions and desires which would lead one into difficulty.
- 2) The one committed to God and the proclamation of the Gospel must realize that there is someone who does not want the communication of the Gospel to take place. This does not mean that we always blame our own failures to communicate upon adverse spiritual forces, but that we do take evil seriously. Thus the help of the ascended Christ and the support of a praying community become important.
- 3) One needs to look for ways in which evil is not only using some persons but has located itself in societal structures and geographical locations. This is not looking for evil under every stone or in those who may be opposed to Christian evangelism, but, as part of discerning the factors in a community which one wishes to evangelize, the location of possible evil dynamics should be explored. One may need to do this intuitively, but also the community can be analyzed for its moral and behavioral demographics along with its other demographics.
- 4) If someone comes seeking an exorcism, which probably would be rarely experienced in main-line North American church circles, I believe it is important to first explore all the possible explanations for

the person's experience, especially the psychological. The experience of multiple personalities usually includes a personality which might be described as demonic. If one senses the possibility of the involvement of evil or if this is a central part of the person's world view so that their affliction might yield to an exorcism (whether or not evil is using them), then it is probably worth trying, but *one should know what one is doing and gain the cooperation and support of persons with experience in this. Above all, one should not do it alone.*

5) If one senses or discerns evil in societal structures or geographical locations, the authority of Christ should be invoked by a group of persons who are supporting the evangelism in order to claim Christ's sovereignty over the situation.

The bottom line is: *recognize the reality of evil but do not use it as a simplistic explanation of all difficulties.* Be aware of evil as both a psychological reality and an ontological reality.

VII EVANGELISM AND COMMUNITY

Christian faith and life are not solitary. Without others we too easily avoid that faith is about the possibility of relationships: God's with us and ours with others. Relationship is not auxiliary. God is a Triune God who is relational in God's inner life. God is accompanied by heavenly hosts. The Bible envisions God with God's people who become the basis for a new humanity. Even the initial human being was not created to be alone.

Also, without community we do not have those who may sustain our journey in faith. The fullness of spiritual resources exist only in community, something that is recognized in all of the New Testament passages which speak of spiritual gifts.

The relational emphasis of Christianity may be difficult for some for whom relationship is not central in their personal preferences or who were deeply hurt in relationship. But to avoid the relational emphasis one must almost find another religion which is interested only in the spirituality of the individual. Whatever one's inclinations or anxieties about relationship, relationship is at the heart of the Christian understanding of creation, God, and the realization of God's intent in the future. One of the great images regarding the future in Intertestamental Judaism and early Christianity is the gathering of God's people from the four corners of the earth and the great banquet with God.

Community and Faith

The community is where the possibility of faith is lived out by those who have tested the reality of God and the spirituality of humankind and have journeyed sufficiently into faith to know its truth and relationship to life. As indicated in the chapter on "What Is Coming to Faith?," the process is varied, with different persons at different stages with differing needs and varied experiences. But there are not only stages, though the model of spiritual journey with different stages along the way has been popular. There are other models which are meaningful to many, which portray differences in different ways. There is the model of the sailboat whose sail is filled with the wind of the Spirit, where sails and tiller can be adjusted but one has to work with the flow of the wind. At times one heads into the wind and at other times one goes with the wind. There is the spiral model, with recurring experiences but also movement in some direction. There is the model, like Teresa's *Interior Castle*, which speaks of the journey to the center of the soul where dwells "His Majesty." There is the improvisation model where one puts together, as the gift of God, whatever comes to one, much like a jazz improvisation or a meal made up of leftovers. There is the wagon wheel model where the spokes represent the many directions and involvements of life, directions which are rooted in the hub and bounded by the rim. There is the builder model where one gradually constructs a life edifice which rests upon a foundation and contains rooms for life's needs and activities. Then there are the dark nights which are limited to no model but experienced within them all, when what we once held in faith, which supported us, now seems empty and without reality.

How could one make it alone? Those who have little experience need those who in their lives have traveled a long ways and know the route, its blessings and dangers. Those who for a time can only have unfaith need those who have faith. Faith is what we have together, sustaining each other so that the strangeness of life cannot rob us of our faith and hope, something that easily happens in isolation. How tragic if we were responsible for sustaining faith all by ourselves. When some have little faith, others have much. When for some God is absent, for others God is present. I like the term unfaith, for this does not mean no faith, but expresses what happens to those who journey in faith and at times find faith impossible. Unfaith is the dark side of faith, but it is still faith. It is the dark night of the soul in which the reality of God still remains, though now as in darkness, as in a cloud. Moments of unfaith remind us that faith is grounded in the Mystery which lies beyond all our forms of faith. Even to give up faith for a time, to have no more energy for faith, may be to trust ourselves into the arms of the Mystery and the community where we abandon ourselves to both the community and God, and find that both will sustain us. It is in the moments of unfaith that faith grows and becomes graced rather than our own creation.

One of the difficulties of the Christian community is that it is often seen as the community of those who have arrived, who understand and believe all that is asked, who have said “yes” to everything required, and who have life within control: who are the good and the righteous. There is no journey for those who have arrived. There is no struggle for the perfect. In this game of “Let’s Pretend” persons cannot share their struggle, limits, failures, and journey. Not only are we fooled by our pretense, but we lose our ability to empathize with others and to have com-passion (the ability to feel with someone). How tragic to lose com-passion: that in which we could be most like God.

In II Corinthians Paul makes clear that his humanity will continue with him all his life. In 4:17ff he knows that we have this treasure from God in earthen vessels. Even his abundance of revelations in II Cor. 12 do not relieve him of his thorn in (of?) the flesh. Though his dualism does not allow him to realize the creative potential of his flesh, the Paul who thought he was all right and found he was all wrong on the Damascus road knew how to appreciate that life did depend upon grace. His gentleness towards the offender in the Christian community is portrayed in II Cor. 2. Even after his torrent of thought in Galatians, in his postscript he asks that transgressors be restored “in a spirit of gentleness.”

The word repentance in the New Testament is the translation of a Greek word which means to change one’s mind. Unfortunately this seems to imply that this happens all at once. The Hebrew equivalent behind this word in the Greek Old Testament means to turn around or turn towards. It describes the process of orienting oneself towards God. I like this metaphor which might be another model for spiritual experience. We are turning towards God and the process of turning is an extended one and the community is there to help us in the turning and to hold before us the One towards whom we are turning.

Community and the Validation of the Christian Experience

When evangelization takes place, those evangelized must have some place to come to discover how that which was described to them works. The preaching of the Gospel describes the person of Jesus and ongoing relationship with him, it expresses God’s desire to draw us back, in reconciliation, to God’s self. It describes the presence of the Spirit, God’s presence within the community. It expresses a challenge to new life, not just a life of responsibility but a life which makes use of transcendent dynamics, a life *in* the Spirit. It claims that there is a value system, shaped by God’s sovereignty, beyond current societal values. It claims that the marginal matter, as well as the rich and powerful.

Here is where some of the questions raised in previous paragraphs become important. Are Christians those who have or are attaining some sort of perfection, with their personal struggles and human dynamics under perfect control? Or is the Christian community where the Gospel is taken seriously and all its dimensions are being lived out, without pretense of perfection. Both models represent a taking seriously the Christian faith and life. But I am afraid that the first model often results in failure and disillusionment while the second model understands failure as part of the process of seeking to be responsible and part of the limits of the human condition.

The Christian community usually in some way speaks of grace. For some it is more central than others. Grace, taken seriously, means that the value of a person and the possibility of life lie in God. This inverts the usual value system which exalts ability, accomplishment, attractiveness, charisma, and intellectual ability. When taken seriously, grace means that children, even infants, have the same stature in God’s eyes as the most competent adult. This means that the retarded, brain damaged, disabled, mentally ill and senile are of the same value as the most gifted and accomplished. Moreover, if we believe that a human has a soul, then the quality of the soul in each is the same. Intellectual ability and competence are not categories of spirituality. Thus grace is affirmed or denied by the ways in which we incorporate such persons into the life of the congregation and how we show them respect.

Whether one prefers the psychological models of Jung, Erickson, or others, it is quite clear that to live life is a developmental process. We develop biologically, psychologically, mentally, socially, spiritually, and in our understanding of life’s meaning. Contemporary developmental models usually include adult development which may continue as long as a person lives. There are some very meaningful models of

development in the New Testament, such as Galatians 3-5, where Paul sees the person as starting with a need for structure and custodial care and then developing (through God's provision) to a time of freedom and mature responsibility. Each person comes into the world as a bundle of possibilities which need to be developed and empowered. I believe that an essential part of the church's life is empowering the development of persons in line with their natural gifts and the gifts which are the more direct gifts of God. As part of the direct gifts of God the gift of the Christian vocation, whatever one's way of earning a living, is a powerful formative dynamic. What then will people see when they visit a congregation. Will they discover empowerment within community or a fear of individuality and creativity and insistence upon conformity?

Community as the Place of Existential Security

Recently I had a discussion with some students as to the nature of God's relationship with the world. It is my understanding that the Old Testament sees God as all powerful and the only cosmic power which really matters. God can do all and all happens according to God's will. Thus whatever happens in life reflects a moral order and God's will. I indicated that Intertestamental Judaism and the early church changed this perspective on the world to include many powers, of which God was one, and that the Judaeo-Christian tradition of the first century understood Satan as the ruler of this world, not God. This description of the world was what came to make sense to many Jews in the light of Jewish experience.

This meant that, as things are, God is not in control of all that happens and things can happen that God does not wish. The students found this discussion of a world that God does not control rather upsetting because in order to face the uncertainties of life one needs to feel that God is in control; otherwise anxiety rules and existence becomes uncertain. And yet, as we look at the total experience of life, to describe it as complex and ruled by many powers rather than simple and ruled only by God better fits our experience. The great tragedies of the last hundred years become unexplainable in a world seen as ruled by God -- unless God is seen as immoral or completely arbitrary.

The question of existential "trust or mistrust" (to use the terms of Erickson which describes attitudes that begin in the infant's reaction to the world of its experience), is important because it affects how we perceive and live into life. Maurice Friedman, the renowned authority on Martin Buber, comments:

Thus at the center of faith of biblical Judaism stands not belief, in the ordinary sense of the term, but trust -- a trust that no exile from the presence of God is permanent, that each man and each generation is able to come into contact with reality. The focal need of our age is not faith as a specific intellectual or religious belief but a general attitude of trust -- a sense of being at home in the universe. Existential trust does not mean trust *in* existence as being constituted in one particular way. It cannot be attained by "positive thinking," and it does not lead to "peace of mind" or "peace of soul." It is not inconsonant with pain, grief, anxiety, and least of all with vulnerability. Where it does not exist, one no longer goes forth to meet others: "The broken heart kens nae second spring again, thae the waeful nae cease frae their greeting." There are some people who continue to live, yet never really go out again as a whole being to meet anyone.⁹⁴

The question is: "How can we be at home in the universe when the universe is as it is?" When one analyses human experience it would seem to be true that existential trust does not have much to do with the threats and dangers one encounters as an adult in the world, though it may be reinforced by this. When one knows there is danger it is good to mistrust, but existential mistrust is more than this. It is not contextual but pervasive. One mistrusts whether or not there is any danger present. One mistrusts as a matter of course. One mistrusts because the anxiety about existence of the powerless child is carried in the

⁹⁴. Maurice Friedman, Religion and Psychology: A Dialogical Approach, New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1992 pp. 3-11. Quoted from "Advance uncorrected proofs."

psyche of the adult. Such pervasive existential anxiety does not help one cope with present and real danger, but rather disables one's coping mechanisms.

To call upon an all powerful and controlling God may help one to handle existential anxiety, but it is ultimately open to disillusionment because of the nature of life. Yet, one must "feel" safe in order to live.

Romans 8 really provides a very helpful model. 8:28 used to be translated, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God..." An alternative, and much to be preferred translation which fits the context in Romans 8, is: "We know that in all things God works for good together with those who love him..." It is very difficult to say that all things work for good when the things cited in Rom. 8 are: hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword, and then death, life, angels, rulers, things present, things to come, powers, heights, depths, and other things in creation. What is made clear is not that these things will not happen, but that none of them can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Thus in the love of God and as a child of God one is secure in an insecure world which is groaning in the labor pains of the birthing of a new age. As Paul describes this:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved.⁹⁵

What one needs is existential trust which is not dependent on the realities of life, and this is what Paul affirms. To be able to trust the heart of existence is not dependent on what happens on the periphery of existence. One may learn to trust God and so feel safe in the midst of life's uncertain and sometimes harsh realities. The trust of God is not based upon the trust of life, but the trust of God frees one to live in the midst of life without paralysis or pervasive anxiety.

Now where does community come in regarding this issue? Christian community should be the place where the reality of God becomes real, where the presence of God is sensed, where the love of God is reflected, and the care of God is expressed in countless practical ways. Moreover, existential trust and mistrust were learned in the interpersonal relationships and environment of infancy and childhood. The primary question, often just intuited, becomes: "Can I trust anyone?" Existential trust, from the Christian perspective, involves trust in the faithfulness, graciousness and truthfulness of God. One may seek to learn this directly in relationship with God and to an extent this will born out in life experience (if we understand this as God being faithful in the midst of the complexities of life), but it is best learned in the concrete relationships of congregational life. In most cases, one will not trust the world nor God if one cannot trust the congregation. The congregation is the second family in which life is experienced and trust learned, especially if the first family has failed to provide this. In a society where many families have broken down, it may be the only supportive family some persons have known. From the congregation we can go forth to face the world again.

⁹⁵ . Romans 8:14--24

CONCLUSION: THE GREAT COMMISSION(S)

It is helpful to note the variety of thought on evangelism in the first century church, lest we seek for too easy agreement on the church's evangelistic task. It is probably to the good of God's mission in the world that our definition of it does not come too easy and that our implementation of it is varied.

When we think of the evangelistic task we often frame our understanding in terms of the Matthaean Great Commission or perhaps the words of the ascending Jesus in Acts 1:8. It is my conviction that each of the Gospels ends with some presentation of the evangelistic task while preserving materials supportive of its understanding of this task. How then did the communities and individuals behind the New Testament Gospels understand this task?

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus, in a Galilean resurrection appearance, says to his disciples:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.⁹⁶

This universal mission in Matthew is seen as a post-resurrection mission. According to Matthew, Jesus previously had told his disciples: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."⁹⁷ Thus Israel receives the message first and the Gentiles, later. This is similar to the discussion between the leaders of the Jerusalem Church and Paul in Galatians 2 as to whom they should first go to, the Jews or the Gentiles. Although Matthew uses Markan materials descriptive of Jesus' mission in Gentile areas (Mark 7; Matthew 15), he does not understand its significance as Jesus leading his disciples into experience of the Gentile mission.

According to Matthew Jesus first speaks of the authority given him out of which he commissions the eleven to make disciples of all nations. That is to take the form of baptizing the nations in the name of the Triune God and teaching them what Jesus has commanded them. He then promises to be with them to the close of this age when the Kingdom of God will come. Scholars have pointed out that the Gospel of Matthew and the form of this commission seem to reflect the practices of the later first century church and of a particular Christian community.⁹⁸ Outside of Mark 16:16, part of an ending later added to Mark, there is no other Gospel in which baptism plays such a crucial role in the mission of the disciples. John 4:2 even notes that Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples did (perhaps an apologetic against baptism in a community that had ceased to practice baptism). The formula of baptism is also late, being triune rather than what we encounter elsewhere as baptism "in the name of Jesus". The emphasis on teaching what Jesus has commanded fits the Matthaean community's understanding of Jesus as the true teacher of the Father who brought a Law greater than that of Moses (Matt. 5:17ff). There is no role for the Spirit here as there is in Luke, except for the baptismal formula.⁹⁹ Jesus promises to always be with them.

⁹⁶. Matthew 28: 18-20.

⁹⁷. Matthew 10:5.

⁹⁸. An analysis of the materials selected by Matthew and their perspective seems to indicate a religious community very similar to the mother Christian church in Jerusalem, as described in Acts, and the Jewish Essene community at Qumran. Whereas Luke in Acts indicates a synagogal pattern of structure and life-style for the churches founded by Paul, he is clear that the Jerusalem pattern is quite different. Thus there seem to have developed different approaches to Christianity and Christian life based upon the background and differing convictions of those who were converted to Christianity. There were differences between various "branches" of early Christianity and differences within the same branch (note I John's description of the split that occurred in the Johannine community).

⁹⁹. In Matthew there is little role for the Spirit which appears primarily in passages borrowed from Mark and not in the distinctively Matthaean materials.

However, they seem to have thought of this as speaking of his continuing presence within his community, the transmission of his teaching, and in the authority given to the 11, or to Peter (Matthew 16:17ff). The parables in Matthew 25, added to the discourse about the end-time in Matthew 24, imply Jesus' personal absence until his return at the end.

Because little role is given the Spirit in Matthew and because the presence of Jesus to the church in the here and now seems to be understood in terms of the preservation of what Jesus taught and commanded, transmitted by the church, evangelism consists of teaching others and gaining their commitment to the Jesus of the past, making them disciples of Jesus and the tradition. There is little sense of God and the risen Lord Jesus moving with the church into the future in new ways.

In Luke the commission is found in 24:45-49 (reflected in Acts 1:8).

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."

The RSV translates vs. 48 as "You are witnesses of these things." However, as is often the case in Greek, the verb "to be" is not stated but left to be understood. In the light of the context the future tense makes best sense, thus meaning: "You shall be witnesses of these things." The verse following that then promises them the Spirit, expressing what is found in Acts 1:8:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

The role of the Spirit as the empowerer of both Jesus and the church in Luke is well known, and in Acts the experience of the Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Gospel. As Peter expresses it at Pentecost in words reminiscent of the above passage in Luke:

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁰

This message is understood to have radical social implications. This is variously reflected, such as in Luke's presentation of the Beatitudes (Luke 6) and Jesus' use of Isaiah to express his mission in Luke 4:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to
preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release
to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.¹⁰¹

For Luke the expression of the life of the Jerusalem Church as described in early Acts is probably the ideal of social transformation, the creation of God's new people. The mission to the Gentiles is not a post-resurrection phenomenon, as in Matthew, but the post-resurrection period is the time when the church struggles to come to terms with this universal mission, the Spirit driving the church into broadening arenas of mission. Though Luke sees the tradition of the past as being important (e.g. his Gospel about

¹⁰⁰. Acts 2:38.

¹⁰¹. Luke 4:18-19.

Jesus), the dynamic center of the mission includes both tradition (what is born witness to) and the Spirit (the source of the witness' power and direction). Thus Luke is compelled to produce two works: one on the tradition of Jesus (the Gospel) and the other about the action of the Spirit in the church (Acts).

The Commission in John also has its own characteristics. Jesus appears to the disciples and sends them as his Father sent him, so that they may represent him as he represents the Father:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.¹⁰²

He then breathes on them and says:

Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.

The receiving of the Spirit seems to be understood differently than the Pentecost experience, which is treated in John in the Spirit sayings of chapters 14-16. Jesus here gives his authority to his disciples to proclaim the Gospel of forgiveness. This forgiveness results in the "life" of the Kingdom, as indicated in the concluding verses of chapter 20:

...these (signs) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

The Gospel is full of interesting implications for evangelism. Chapter 21 includes the story of the resurrection appearance of Jesus to the disciples by the lake of Galilee where Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, calling him to feed and tend his sheep. In John 17 Jesus prays for those who will believe through the words of his disciples (vs. 20). John preserves special memory of the role of women in evangelism. In chapter 4 Jesus turns the Samaritan woman into an evangelist, while in chapter 20 Mary Magdalene becomes "evangelist" to the disciples with regard to Jesus' resurrection. All of the Johannine pericopes focus on the meaning of Jesus' person, not just his sayings or doings which are seen as "signs" of his person. In chapter 1 Jesus invites John the Baptist's disciples to "come and see", to be with him and discover what there is in him, an invitation repeated by Philip to Nathanael. In his departure discourses Jesus even provides for new revelation in new situations:

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.¹⁰³

The commission is difficult to discover in Mark 16 because the early church made so many changes to the end of Mark since it lacked resurrection appearances, ending at 16:8. I understand the commission to be in vs. 7. Here the angel at the tomb reminds the disciples of what Jesus previously said in 14:27-28:

You will all fall away; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

It would seem that the changes made to Mark 16 have also affected verse 7:

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.

¹⁰². John 20:21.

¹⁰³. John 16:12-13. There is a similar passage in John 14:25-26. The Johannine community then struggled out how this new revelation was to be related to what they knew of the historical Jesus, which struggle is reflected in I John.

As the verse presently stands it has the angel tell the disciples that Jesus is going to Galilee first, they should go there and there they will see him -- thus following a tradition that resurrection appearances occurred in Galilee. However, when one reads Mark 14 it becomes evident that is not what the saying originally meant.¹⁰⁴ Jesus is the Shepherd who is stricken, and so his disciples are scattered like sheep. However, when he is raised up he will again go before them. To understand this one has to recognize that the Palestinian shepherd led the sheep by going before them rather than driving them from behind. Jesus has then promised to again lead his disciples. Galilee may be understood as his leading them back to the scene of their ministry, but since Galilee in Aramaic means "outskirts" or "limits", in the original Aramaic the saying of Jesus may mean more: "I shall go before you to the ends/limits." This is similar to the promise in Matthew to be with them to the close of the age. However, Jesus does not tell his disciples to repeat his commandments, but that he will lead them, implying that what they will do depends on what he will lead them to do

Thus all of the Gospels, in fact the whole of the New Testament, reflect a consciousness that Jesus has given a mission. This mission and its implications are variously formulated according to the perceptions, context and experiences of various segments of early Christianity. The Matthaean community understood itself as given a mission by Jesus to call persons to discipleship of past tradition: Jesus' "commandments". The on-going presence of the resurrected Jesus was described as existing primarily within the tradition and authority given to the church.¹⁰⁵ Thus its mission could only be defined out of the past, in responsibility to the past. Its emphasis on "teaching" was characteristic of a church influenced by Pharisaic Judaism and with a tradition to transmit. Such a community would then have difficulty believing that new contexts called for contextual and sometimes new responses.

The hesitancy of the Matthaean community to speak much of the activity of the resurrected Christ within the on-going history of the community was not only influenced by its theological stance, but is understandable as an historical issue. All of the New Testament traditions speak of the cessation of Jesus' resurrection appearances after a relatively short period of time. Paul knows that his experience of the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road was unusual.¹⁰⁶ Those segments of the early church which found religious experience to be a central aspect of their religious life, actually the majority, usually defined this as experience of the "Spirit". In this way they distinguished it from experience of the resurrected Christ. And yet they knew that the resurrected Christ sent the Spirit and was in the Spirit. In Gal. 4:6 Paul speaks

¹⁰⁴. It would seem that the phrase "there you will see him" may have been an early addition to vs. 7 so that the ending of Mark would now refer to a resurrection appearance. The same rationale seems to have been behind the addition of the longer (often printed as vs. 9-20) and shorter endings attested to in our manuscript tradition. However, the reference to a Galilean appearance immediately after the resurrection creates serious difficulties as to where the resurrection occurred, for John 20 and Luke 24 all refer to appearances in Judaea. Matthew follows the implication of the ending of Mark by speaking of a vague appearance in Galilee whose only significant content is the Great Commission. The solving of the problem of the ending of Mark does not then merely result in the discovery of a Commission there, but also helps to deal with the strange emergence of a tradition that Jesus appeared early in Galilee. John 21 recounts a late Galilean appearance after Judaeian appearances.

It should also be noted that the endings added to Mark include much more detailed information about the Commission, including the signs that will accompany belief: such as exorcism, tongues, handling serpents and drinking poison.

One must wonder then why Mark ended his Gospel as he did, without resurrection appearances and without any detailing of what the commission meant or what they were to do with it. It is my conclusion that Mark wanted to present at the end of the Gospel a situation existentially similar to that of the women when they heard the message from the young man (angel): "He is risen -- he goes before you." The women responded to the message, though unable to share it because of their fear, without yet having seen him and without yet knowing what to do. That is also our situation. We need to go behind as he goes before and discover.

¹⁰⁵. The Matthaean community, if one may judge from the parable of Jesus' identification with suffering humanity (24:31), may also have seen Jesus as present in those to whom they ministered.

¹⁰⁶. I Cor. 15:8 - "as to one untimely born".

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of the Spirit of God's Son. In John 16:12-15 Jesus speaks to his disciples of "the Spirit of truth" who will guide them into all truth: the truth which is Jesus' and is ultimately derived from the Father. Thus Jesus in various ways came to them in the experience of the Spirit, but it was an experience more nebulous, less defined, more "spiritual". Consequently most of the early church that believed in the role of the Spirit had to struggle with how to relate this subjective experience to the objective historical traditions about Jesus.¹⁰⁷

It is helpful for us that the early church struggled with the nature and definition of spiritual experience and recognized that "Christ in the Spirit in the world" was not always easy to discern. However, they were not willing to give up their faith in the living Christ in the world because of difficulties of discernment. They experienced the dynamic of the Spirit as well as believing in the presence of God and Christ within the world. The very ambiguity of identifying the Spirit with both the Father and the Son supported the relationship of the two. With faith in the Spirit much of the church then looked to God's/Christ's actions and leadings in the present to clarify mission in the church's changing contexts. Mission was to be defined not merely out of the past, but also out of the present and future.

The simple commission in the original Markan ending best expresses the modern mission of the church. As Jesus said, when he is raised he will go before us into the world, unto its ends. We stand before this message as did the women at the tomb, hearing it with "trembling and astonishment". Where Jesus is and what he intends we will only discover as we follow.

¹⁰⁷. See, e.g., I Cor. 12:1-3, I John 4:1-3.