

I METHODOLOGY FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Having provided an overview of an approach to evangelism, let us now begin to examine some of the theological issues. The first is the methodology for dealing with these issues. It essentially has to do with the use of Scripture in the formulation of answers in relationship to other sources of understanding, and will hopefully make the approach advocated in this paper more understandable. There are, however, two other significant reasons for dealing with methodology. First, for many of the persons that the church wishes to reach, i.e. those whose perspective has been influenced by the modern world and who are not in some way "churched", methodology and credibility are linked together. Thus to some the methodology makes the message more credible and contributes to evangelism. A number of the issues raised in this paper are much more crucial if one is trying to communicate to the "outsider". In communicating to "insiders" or "previous insiders" these issues may not be seen the same way because they have already developed their "cherished" way of viewing things. Second, one needs to be able to provide converts with a methodology for values, decisions, and understanding life.

The Christian faith is beset by the problems inherent in being a historical religion. It claims eternal truths and values, yet affirms its historical nature by confessing a history which became embodied in Holy Scriptures (salvation history from Abraham to Christ, the life of Christ, and the history of the Spirit in the early church). The church's confession of history was complicated by the variety of responses and traditions which arose out of that history so that the church's experience with variety and its inclusion within the canon ultimately made it impossible to identify eternal truth and values with any singular expression of it. The development of historical criticism has reconfronted the church with the variety it originally embraced in the development of the canon.

The church in its on-going proclamation and application of its truth and values then has to contend not only with the variety in its present context, but the variety of its tradition. It needs then to find some way of sorting out and affirming that which is eternal, formulating faith statements in a variety of contemporary contexts, and working on ethical issues complicated by lack of unambiguous guidance from its tradition.

One solution to the sorting out of the eternal from the contingent is to listen seriously to what the Bible says about God as "person". Person transcends all actions and expressions and remains a constant entity behind one's experience of him/her. Consistency is to be found in the person experienced and in the covenants and commitments which the person promises. Changing historical contexts do not change the presence and commitments of the person. Thus God enters into relationship within the framework of covenants with Abraham and Moses and redefines and clarifies the nature of relationship/covenant in Christ. The name "Yahweh", given in the Exodus experience, emphasizes God's consistent presence ("I am" or "I will be") and the name revealed in the New Testament ("*Abba*, Father") emphasizes the caring and dependable nature of God's relationship. The giving of the Spirit clarifies that the relationship with God is not distant (a relationship with a God "up there"), but present in human experience. The first and second commandments of the Decalogue then affirm the uniqueness of God and that God must be recognized to transcend all images, attempts to explain and describe. Only God is God.

In the practical process of formulating faith and ethical decisions, one needs to find a way of proceeding. It seems to me that there are two foci that are helpful. The first is to analyze the dialogical relationship of Spirit (the active presence of God) and tradition (the deposits from previous experience of God and reflection upon such experience). The second is to examine creation (or "general revelation") as a source of knowledge. Creation, as "general revelation," has long been felt to disclose information supportive of and supplementary to "special revelation". As tradition is in a dialogical relationship with Spirit, so the religious traditions about creation need to be in dialogue with new scientific studies which also disclose the nature of creation.

Spirit and Tradition

The role of the Spirit, affirmed in most of the New Testament traditions, has implications that are often neglected. Usually the Spirit is relegated to the role of inspirer and interpreter of tradition already established -- or the creative impulse of early Christianity which is thought not to be active in the same way since the days of the apostles or the early councils. In this way all authority is always placed within the tradition. Taken seriously, the Spirit means that things are never settled and the church is continuously engaged in rethinking in the light of God's engagement with the present age. One must respect the tradition, but cannot idolize it in any form. Only God is God and God keeps on being God by not abdicating to the tradition.

The biblical tradition may be seen as follows: The divergent traditions of Judaism which bear witness to God and his/her relationship to life are converged, clarified and evaluated in terms of a unique action of God in history in Christ. However, this self-disclosure of God is itself rendered ambiguous and multiform by the humanity and culturally-conditioned perceptions of those who witnessed it, bore witness, and transmitted this witness. Though God in Christ is an unambiguous reality, its perception is not. It was then left to the church, under the guidance of the ongoing activity of God (the Spirit), to do two things:

- 1) to clarify the misconceptions by distinguishing, in the light of ongoing history, where the God-in-Christ-event had not been adequately understood or had been actually misunderstood in the light of cultural and religious presuppositions;
- 2) to be open to the speaking of God to newly developing issues and circumstances not adequately anticipated or treated in the tradition.

In the light of both, the first century Christians and churches that produced the New Testament literature reflected a variety of views, while seeking to remain faithful to God's intention, and they struggled with the diversity both within and between Christian communities.

Both the Johannine and Pauline traditions affirm the following:

- 1) The role of the Spirit must be recognized. One cannot make the error of Pharisaic Judaism in tying God's activity and revelation to the written word, the Law. (I Cor. 14, John 16:12-15)
- 2) One must stand within the available tradition of the Christ event, recognizing Jesus as Lord and listening to what he taught. There seems to be some recognition that the tradition on Jesus himself was varied so that some "critical" decisions were probably necessary to know what Jesus wished, taught and did (e.g. the handling of the tradition about Jesus in the Gospels). The Old Testament seems to have been largely seen as prophesying the action of God in Christ and the witness of the early church and not to have been used as witness independent of or parallel to the Christ event. (I Peter 1:10ff, II Cor. 3:12ff; II Tim. 3:16-17 is an exception) In some cases Christ, or the Spirit of Christ, was seen as operative in the Old Testament history (similar to the way Jews viewed personified "Wisdom"). To stand within the Christ event was then also to stand within the streams of Old Testament history and their fulfillment.
- 3) A quality of life (particularly "love") should be manifested if one claimed one was expressing knowledge of God. (I Cor. 13, I John 4:7ff)
- 4) Community discernment of perceptions of God's will and truth were important. (I Cor. 14:26ff)
- 5) Especially in the authentic Pauline materials there is a recognition of the limited nature of all human perception and the ego-centered use of knowledge (note particularly I Cor. 8:1-3 and I Cor. 13).

It is true that from the later first century on the developing church in various ways becomes sociologically and theologically less tolerant, but this must be understood as related to its internal and external struggles. One must listen to its solutions without surrender of the freedom to be faithful to both tradition and Spirit.

If the Christian of today opts to stand within tradition and yet be responsible to God's contemporary action (the Spirit), one is in the uncertain situation of driving a road with many markers, but with the destination unclear. The analogy of a road takes seriously the long span of history through which the church has lived. The biblical analogy of the church as the Temple inhabited by the Spirit was appropriate when the

church was seen not so much in terms of extended history. There is no other foundation than Christ, but one does not stand still on the foundation. Life flows out as a ribbon or highway through varied landscapes, and one must follow. One may protest that if the future is opened to the Spirit there are no absolutes, but that is not true. There is the absolute of God him/herself, expressed in the Christ-event and active in on-going history. In this way God remains God and all witness and interpretation remains just that. The first two commandments have been taken seriously. The answers formulated by the church(es) over the centuries must be listened to seriously, but not taken ultimately. In the best sense, the traditions always lead us beyond themselves to the God who is beyond them.

Creation and Science

In the history of Christianity the doctrine of creation has played a significant role. This has been used to explore creation's intention, and predicament, which is restored by God's saving action. Up to the development of modern science, creation has been interpreted primarily mythologically, expressing experienced phenomena and the projections of the human psyche. Views on creation were varied, witness the diverse Old Testament creation accounts -- especially the two in Genesis 1-3. There are also several New Testament creation accounts (e.g. John 1:1-18, Col. 1: 15-20, and Hebrews 1-2) which are reinterpretations of Old Testament traditions. It would seem that as God is continuously interpreted by the Spirit, so creation should be by the discoveries of science and God's continuing revelations about creation. Thus our myths and descriptions of creation should continuously be changing so as to contribute to our understanding of God's intention for creation and creation's evolution and devolution. Our perception of what is so "by nature" then cannot be determined merely by the ancient myths which in themselves bear no more uniform witness than other biblical traditions.

There is no desire either to depreciate the insights of ancient myth or to lay claim to false objectivity on the part of modern science. It is merely to affirm that our understanding of creation, from which we might formulate positions on issues, is constantly in process and that it is legitimate that this be so.

Viewed this way, the dialectic of Spirit and tradition, and that of modern science and the creation myths, provide two foci from which to approach the church's concerns in ways responsible to the past, yet open and committed to God's disclosures in history's continual unfolding process.

This dialectic occurs always within a context which shapes its concerns and becomes the situation to which God would address a word. This has been significantly explored on a technical level in Robert Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies* and in a more popular vein in such books as Robert McAfee Brown's *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes* and Letty Russell's *Changing Contexts of Our Faith*.²

². Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Orbis, 1985. Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*, Westminster Press, 1985. Letty Russell, ed., *Changing Contexts of Our Faith*, Fortress Press, 1985.

II WHAT DO WE COMMUNICATE?

The Heart of the Gospel

The term "evangelize" is probably borrowed by the early church from Isaiah, though it also had secular usage in the New Testament world. It literally means "to announce a good message", the prefix transliterated "ev" meaning "good" or "well". The Gospels are given the term "evangel" because they not only embody the good news of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, but proclaim Jesus as the bringer of the Kingdom. Paul speaks of this Gospel as the "power of God for salvation", which means that the Gospel is a form of God's continuing presence and activity. (Rom. 1:16-17)

But what is the heart and meaning of this Gospel? An appeal to Scripture cannot settle this problem because of the variety of witness and approach which exists within the New Testament itself. One has only to contrast Matthew, Paul and Revelation in their approach to Jesus. Matthew has large collections of the sayings of Jesus because of the importance he placed on them in his understanding of the Gospel. Jesus is the true Scribe, in the tradition of Moses and Ezra, to whom the Father has revealed all things (Matt. 11:25-30). He gives a new Law from a new mount (the Sermon on the Mount Matt. 5-7). He comes not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it, and his disciples' righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:17-20). The sayings of Jesus then become commandments which his disciples are to teach to all nations (Matt. 28:19). Clearly the words of Jesus are revelation and the significance of narrative or story recedes, becoming supportive of Jesus' authority.

Paul, though alluding a number of times to Jesus' sayings, seldom quotes them. I do not feel that this is because of ignorance, but because of a different approach. He does not even quote them extensively in the ethical sections of his epistles. Understanding the Law to have come to an end in Christ, he does not intend a new legalism based on Jesus' sayings. For Paul, the Gospel as an embodiment of the "story" of Jesus, which expressed the Christian self-understanding, is central. His ethics are essentially derivative from this as it is reflected and dramatized in the Baptismal rite (see Col. 3). The logical connective "therefore" in Romans 12:1 also well expresses the Pauline understanding of the relationship of the Gospel (chapters 1-11) and Christian ethics (chapters 12-16).

In the book of Revelation both the sayings and the "story" of the historical Jesus recede in importance. The author portrays his understanding as coming to him "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). The resurrected Christ declares to the churches what he did not say historically, declaring the things to come, after the pattern of John 16:12-15. In visions and auditions he tells them "what must soon take place" (Rev. 22:6), calls them to repentance, exhorts them to perseverance. It is with regard to these "revelations" that John pronounces awful judgment upon anyone who adds or detracts. Some modern scholars regard Revelation as a Christianized piece of Jewish Apocalyptic, J.M. Ford even suggesting in the Anchor Commentary that Revelation preserves large amounts of the preaching of John the Baptist.³

This is enough to illustrate the way the nature of the biblical material prevents neat solutions. Having said this, I would like to comment on my understanding of the "heart of the Gospel".

Contrary to Matthew, Paul realizes the problem posed by trying to make the Gospel propositional. In I Cor. 13:8-12 Paul points out that our present human knowledge is partial, childlike, and will eventually pass away when in the end-time knowledge becomes complete. That human knowledge has these limitations should not be too disturbing, because God knows us fully even though we know him only in part. Human life depends more on God's knowledge of us than ours of God. This is reinforced as an important element in Paul's thought by his allusions to it in Gal. 4:9 and I Cor. 8:3. Not only does Paul's statement limit the possibilities of propositional knowledge, whether philosophical, theological, or ethical,

³ J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, The Anchor Bible, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1975.

but it really seems to be speaking about a different kind of knowledge related to his emphasis on the Spirit in I Cor. 2. It speaks of inter-personal relationship and knowledge where two persons exist in real relationship without the relationship necessarily involving much objective knowledge by one of the other. This is why love endures. Knowledge *about* changes but relationship *with* endures. Biblically, love as human relationship is seen as the greatest gift of God, made possible and defined by God's establishment of relationship with humanity. It then endures because it is the primary thing that God is doing. Paul does not deal with the problem of relationship in I Cor. 12 merely because there are divisions in the church, but because relationship is the primary creation of God's Spirit. One cannot claim God's Spirit unless one recognizes relationship. This same Spirit which leads persons to become aware of their relationship with God (to say *Abba*, Father, and become aware of "sonship" -Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6-7) also creates new human relationship. The point then is that both on the level of human response to others and human response to God emphasis is not on information but on relationship. Paul here stands in real continuity with Jesus who confronted persons with God, not a new theology or a new Law, and taught them to address and pray to God as *Abba*, Aramaic for "dear Father" or "Dad" (a familiar form of address).⁴

If these conclusions are legitimate, then the content of Scripture is God and relationship with God, and only secondarily information about God. The information about is instrumental to the relationship and not final in itself. The relationship between the preaching of the Gospel and the experience of the Spirit in Paul points this up. The Gospel is the witness to what God has done, it is the occasion for the exercise of God's power, and the result is the Spirit: the experience of being in relationship and knowing that God is our "Father".⁵ In Gal. 1 Paul argues for preserving the integrity of his understanding of the Gospel to keep the Galatians from the wrong understanding of God which would veil from them the nature of God's relationship.

Continuing the analogy of interpersonal relationship, it becomes apparent that one cannot know another unless the other chooses to reveal him/herself. Interpersonal knowledge is revelation, disclosure. Certainly one may come to know something about the other person in an objective way by observation, but this is only knowledge *about* rather than knowledge *of*. Thus knowledge of the "heart of the Gospel" comes not be wrestling it from God, not by analytical observation, but by being adequately attentive, waiting and open.

In a collection of essays by the contemporary French mystic Simone Weil, entitled *Waiting for God*, there is an essay entitled "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God." Her essential theme is that prayer consist of waiting and attention before God until God penetrates us, not we God. The application of this to our understanding of the "heart of the Gospel" should be apparent. Let me quote a few paragraphs:

The key to a Christian conception of studies is the realization that prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God. The quality of the attention counts for much in the quality of the prayer. Warmth of heart cannot make up for it ...

Most often attention is confused with a kind of muscular effort. If one says to one's pupils: "Now you must pay attention," one sees them contracting their brows, holding their breath, stiffening their muscles. If after two minutes they are asked what they have been

⁴. "Abba" without a pronominal suffix indicating whose father is a familiar form of address. The addition of "our", "my", etc., makes it polite.

⁵. Galatians 3-4 is significant here. Being a son of Abraham, and therefore of God, is not viewed as something that is merely declared in the Gospel as effected in Christ. God did send his Son that we (both male and female) might receive adoption and, in the language of Baptism, put on Christ. However, the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ, is the Spirit (3:14) and God's act in Christ is completed in the sending of "the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father'" (4:6). Thus the Gospel, speaking of relationship, is fulfilled in the Spirit's actualization of relationship.

paying attention to, they cannot reply. They have been concentrating on nothing. They have not been paying attention. They have been contracting their muscles ...

Will power, the kind that, if need be, makes us set our teeth and endure suffering, is the principal weapon of the apprentice engaged in manual work. But, contrary to the usual belief, it has practically no place in study. The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire, there must be pleasure and joy in the work. The intelligence only grows and bears fruit in joy. The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running. Where it is lacking there are no real students, but only poor caricatures of apprentices who, at the end of their apprenticeship, will not even have a trade.

It is the part played by joy in our studies that makes of them a preparation for spiritual life, for desire directed toward God is the only power capable of raising the soul. Or rather, it is God alone who comes down and possess the soul, but desire alone draws God down. He only comes to those who ask him to come; and he cannot refuse to come to those who implore him long, often and ardently ...

Attention consist of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it ...

In every school exercise there is a special way of waiting upon truth, setting our hearts upon it, yet not allowing ourselves to go out in search of it. There is a way of giving our attention to the data of a problem in geometry without trying to find the solution or to the words of a Latin or Greek text without trying to arrive at the meaning, a way of waiting, when we are writing, for the right word to come of itself at the end of our pen, while we merely reject all inadequate words.⁶

In terms of New Testament teaching about the God who in Jesus has promised to be with us, who urges us to say "*Abba*" and knows us better than we know God, the idea of waiting for God is not completely appropriate. Yet even though we assume that God stands continuously in relationship with us, there is also a sense in which God comes, breaking through into our awareness and bringing us some measure of understanding. We cannot know God better by our effort, by setting our teeth or contracting our muscles. We can only try to be attentive.

Thus far the "heart of the Gospel" has been defined in terms of God and relationship with God ("with a view to the love of God"). There is another element to the Gospel which might be called "life-style". In a very real sense this also transcends knowledge, conceptual expressions, and moralistic legalisms. It has to do with the new being of a person, and being in relationship to God. As Paul says at the end of Galatians after a long theological discussion and after fervently arguing against circumcision: "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, but a new creation." (Gal. 6:15) What matters is not the form of theology or ethical expression, but the new being in a person.

Because this new reality which comes into being in relationship with God transcends knowledge about it, it cannot be understood primarily as an ethical philosophy or moral rules. In the New Testament we encounter a Christian self-understanding, particularly as expressed in Baptismal practice (e.g. Col. 3), which helps the Christian approach ethical problems. There are also ethical guidelines given in the ethical

⁶. Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, N.Y.: Capricorn Books, 1951, pp. 105-113.

sections of the New Testament epistles (e.g. Eph. 5-6, Col. 3-4, I Peter 2-3). However, one can only fully understand by being open to the life-style God creates by the Spirit (meaning in relationship with God's self) and by venturing into these possibilities of new being. This would mean opening oneself to the possibilities of relationship with God and new creation. Yet one could not do this in mere passivity, waiting for the new life-style to happen as gift without participation. Life-style implies something that only happens in the process of living, venturing and trying. What the life-style is becomes apparent in the process of living it. This is even true of relationship with God which biblically is not seen as some abstraction from life: God is to be known as one lives with God and is obedient. Thus the knowing of the heart of the Gospel is closely related to acting and living. Acting and living become revelatory experiences.

Luke 15 contains three parables of lost things. The first tells of a lost sheep, the second of a lost coin, and the third of two "lost" sons (Parable of the Prodigal). The parable about the sons is the climax of the passage. It tells of two sons, neither of whom understood the Father. One grudgingly stayed home to do his duty. The other went away to find himself. The Father loved both and allowed each to follow the course he felt necessary, even though this cost him a great deal. The cost was not only the pain of failed relationships, but public embarrassment at how his sons behaved towards him. The one son returned home, sensing on a limited level that what he needed was there. And his Father received him in love and with celebration. The older brother reacts with rage, but the conversation with his Father shows that emotionally he also has been "away" from his Father. The story is unfinished. We don't know the course of events for either son. We don't know how the "prodigal" turned out. We don't know whether the older brother came to terms with his long standing "estrangement" from his Father. And yet the Father was there engaging each in the process of relationship. The story is unfinished because the audience is intended to identify with the figures and finish the story in their own response. Both relationship with the Father and styles of behavior are to be lived out, and their nature and possibilities to be discovered in the process of living. Meanwhile, the Father is there and extends his arms. This is a most pure expression of the Gospel, which at its heart is relational. Whatever else is said here about evangelism, whatever the complexity of issues, this is evangelism at its simplest.

The Christian Gospel and A Comprehensive Approach to Life

The Christian Gospel and reflection on the nature of life involve important aspects of a comprehensive approach to life which are of ultimate importance to persons facing the challenges of life. Though formulation of the Christian understanding of these aspects must be based within Scripture and the theological traditions, it must also come to terms with the best the sciences have to contribute to our understanding of life. It cannot merely repeat biblical questions and biblical answers without raising the question of how cultural form is wed to evangelical content in the Bible. It needs to distinguish what is to be taken ultimately and seriously from the cultural forms in which matters of ultimate concern were expressed. It must also recognize that the biblical authors spoke contextually rather than universally, to particular persons in particular contexts with particular issues and particular languages and traditions, something Paul explicitly treats in I Cor. 9:19ff and Jesus also seems to have recognized.

The following describe the important aspects of a comprehensive approach. People will be drawn to those who can provide this and will become aware of the importance and contribution of the Christian tradition and life. People want more than "salvation". They want a comprehensive faith which will help them to live and deal with life.

1. Christianity must affirm the reality of God and God's gracious movement towards humanity, a God who enters into relationship and whose will to relationship does not depend upon human understanding and willingness. God does not react. God acts.
2. Christianity affirms that the relationship with God is the basis for life and ethics. The basic question can be said to be: is life with or without God? This is the meaning of the significant role for the Spirit in the NT: the "Spirit" is a way of speaking of the presence of God and relationship with God as resource.

3. The Intertestamental period and early Christianity recognized the world as complex, not simple. Many factors enter into life. Jesus' crucifixion means that all does not go God's way in this complex world. God helps us to live life, but does not control all of life -- not in this world. Rooted in God we are safe in God but bear the risks of natural, historical, and personal forces. To have faith does not fix everything within world and history.

4. There is a spiritual world where God is sovereign, which exists the way God would have it. This is the world of God, of good spiritual forces, and of those who have died and have gone to be with God. The "Communion of the Saints" means that we have a relationship with this world: it intersects with our world and touches us. We live with awareness of God's world as our vision of the future and resource in the present.

5. There is much in early Christianity that was negative about the world. We cannot afford this because it separates Christians from responsibility for the world and makes them forget that the world is a place where God can meet them, which God made good. The world is the place where we live out present life. The world is the place where we live out life in our biological and psychological apparatus called "body." The world and our bodies are our present place to be, and we must be there for God: this is our mission. We do not take our values from worldly systems (which the NT regarded as neutral powers), but we do need to exist for the world as God entered the world and became flesh in Jesus: Our Christian understanding of life must help us know how to live in the world and how, at times, to make compromises with it which will not compromise what is essential.

6. Our faith needs to help us understand both suffering and death. There is much suffering in the world which does not go away. We cannot assign this to God or God becomes immoral. We need to know how God helps us to deal with the often harsh realities of life. We also need to know what it is to die, and what those who die experience. It just is not true that death cannot be described. There was much speculation about death in Jewish literature at the time of Jesus. Jesus came back from death to affirm the reality of the spiritual world to his disciples. Today there is a great deal of literature on near-death experience. Our faith must help us understand how to maintain our joy in life in the face of all of life.

7. Our faith must help us understand what it is to be a human being, what it is like, and what the limits and possibilities of being human are. It must help us respect and wisely live within our humanity. It must help us know that in humanity God willed to disclose God's self and purposes. In fact, our humanity, when we are willing, becomes a place where God is present to the world (in Luke-Acts the Spirit comes upon real persons and thus God is present to the world).

8. Our faith must help us understand that we have a soul, that we are spiritual beings and do not totally come into being only in the procreative biological process. Our soul is a resource for living.

9. Our faith must help us understand how to live with others, how to love, and how to relate to our created world. Love is very important for God is relational, longs for relationship, and calls upon us to do the same.

10. The church must provide a supportive community in which life is understood and by which it becomes possible. It is a person's "second family" to assist them in their new birth and new or second life. Their first life happened to them in their biological families. They may not have had much chance to intentionally participate in this. Their second life is one in which they can participate and which is explicitly seen to be resourced by God. New birth and life means life "from above," as stated in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

11. We must come to terms with the centrality of Jesus in knowing these things while remembering that Jesus is a way to God, not to himself. Jesus rejoices over whoever comes to God by whatever way. For many he will be the friend/Lord who helps them along the way and reminds them of their Abba/Father (Gal. 4:6).

12. We must have a deep respect for each person, for cultural and personal differences, and for the fact that each person and each soul belongs to God: God has created them. Thus we must respect the spiritual journey unique to each as possibly representing the person's natural process and God's wise plan.

Christology

Though there are varied Christologies in the New Testament, by the second century Johannine Christology and its Christocentric exclusivism (Christ as the only way) became dominant. In our day with the new self-consciousness of other great world religions it is dubious as to whether we can immediately discuss with them *their* religious experience in terms of *our* particularity (Christ). This does not mean to deny Christocentrism as meaningful to ourselves, as expressing the special treasure of our "form of spirituality". It means that for the sake of mission we need to reflect on how the Gospel might be expressed in the modern contexts of our mission, perhaps with more attention to the Father as the commonality of religious experience. It is also helpful for Christians to be reminded that our God is Trinitarian and that the Trinitarian nature of God is an important part of Christian experience, not only Christian theology. Later there will be a discussion of the trinitarian nature of the Christian experience of God.

Though this may raise a question about whether the Christian message should always be Christocentric, we must never forget that the church lives in responsibility to our living Lord who leads us in mission and helps us to find appropriate expression for the message which he feels right for our time. Also, we cannot help but tell his story, through whose life we see both God and heaven.

Judaism and the Form of the Gospel

The literature of Intertestamental Judaism which includes a vast amount of Apocalyptic literature, the literature and oral tradition of the Pharisaic movement, the significant literature of the Wisdom writers, and the literature of the Essene movement, indicates a Judaism which moved far beyond the O.T. In fact, all of the Jewish sects which one finds during N.T. times only originated late second century B.C. Thus the century and a half before the birth of Jesus produced a Judaism which was varied in approach and thought and was influenced by (and reacted to) the Greco/Roman world in which it found itself. Its various sects saw the O.T. as their sacred literature, but interpreted it in ways supportive of their views -- much as early Christianity did (which also started as a Jewish sect). The various understandings of these Jewish schools about world, history, God, figures mediating God, life, death, life after death, etc., cannot be grasped merely from the O.T. An interesting example is the figure of the Messiah (a human figure of Davidic or priestly lineage) who in Apocalyptic literature recedes in importance to become a sovereign over a temporary kingdom until God, or his heavenly emissary, transform heaven and earth into the ultimate kingdom. It is within this Intertestamental Judaism that one finds the Judaism that is the background of the New Testament church and its literature. The development of early Christology cannot be understood apart from personified Wisdom in the Wisdom literature and "the Man from Heaven" in Apocalyptic. The dualism in the New Testament comes from the dualism of Apocalyptic: flesh and world as beyond redemption, Satan as Lord of the world, the deterioration of history until the period of the Great Tribulation and cosmic battles between God and Satan, the final judgment with the resurrection of the dead in a spiritual, not a fleshly, body (some literature even spoke of the survival of an eternal soul without a body).

It is important to recognize the ways in which the perceptions of Judaism colored perception of the problems to which the Gospel provided answer. The idea of "sin" will give a chance to explore this.

Sin

The idea of "sin" portrays an understanding of human existence. Though there has been a strong emphasis on "sin" in the Judaeo-Christian tradition (and hence in much of Western thought), the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and much of modern psychology have raised questions about the legitimacy of this emphasis. Yet the treatment of "sin" in the Judaeo-Christian tradition does represent part of the human experience of existence and therefore needs to be adequately heard as well as qualified by new insight into the nature of life. In doing this one always encounters the issue of the authority of biblical views. Thus it is helpful to adequately probe the biblical materials themselves for variety of view and interpretation.

In the biblical interpretation of sin there are several dimensions:

- Sin describes the problem that one has with oneself (one struggles with oneself and is not able to do what one intends)
- Sin also enters into the nature of one's relationship with others, relating to failure in relationship and harm of others. There are also communal aspects to sin as well as interpersonal.
- Sin describes failures or rebellion in one's relationship with God. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition the relationship with God is also affected by one's relationship with oneself and others. In other words, all sin is of concern to God.

The understanding of sin in Intertestamental Judaism, which is the background of earliest Christianity, is decidedly affected by Post-Exilic developments and particularly developments which occur within the two centuries just prior to the origin of Christianity. Though there is a great deal of reflection on and interpretation of earlier Old Testament traditions, the Old Testament materials are frequently understood in new or expanded ways.

First there is the mythology of the Fall of humankind. Adam(man) and Eve(mother of the living) whose "original sin" was to seek the knowledge of good and evil so that they might be "like God". Thus was sin introduced into the world. Jewish thought did not see the descendants of Adam as guilty for Adam's sin (a view of later Christian theology), but that Adam's sin introduced sin into the world. All now sinned, but they sinned their own sins so that in II Esdras 7:48 ff one finds the lament "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants." This is very much like Rom 5:12, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned..." Jewish thought also speculated about the distortions introduced into human nature and existence by the Fall.

It is interesting to note that there is no story of the Fall in the Genesis 1 creation narrative. It is difficult to know how much this was perceived in Judaism. Philo of Alexandria does identify Gen. 1 as the story of the creation of the heavenly Man, while Gen. 2 is the story of earthly Man. Psalm 8, which is a Midrash (commentary) on Genesis 1, does not include any inkling of the Fall. The Midrash in John 1:1-18 also does not use the Fall to describe the human predicament, but rather draws upon the themes of light and darkness inherent in Genesis 1. There is between Gen. 1 and Gen. 2-3 a deep chasm in their understanding of the role of humanity in the world. Both describe humans as created to care for the world, but the similarity stops there. In Gen. 1 "Man" is created male and female in the image of God ... woman is not an afterthought. In Genesis 2 woman is created from Man, the primary creation. She is created after the animals ... and upon her rests the primary responsibility for the Fall.. Also, whereas in Gen. 1 "Man" is created to represent God in the world as an ancient king placed an image of himself in a city to represent his authority and is to have dominion, Gen. 2-3 describes a Man and Woman created for dependency, punished because they sought maturity, i.e. to know good and evil. The implications of Gen. 2-3 have done great disservice to humanity, frequently interpreted in antifeminine directions, such as in I Timothy 2: 13-15. Genesis 2-3 needs careful examination so that we might be aware of its value and distortions.

Besides the Fall of humanity, there was understood to have been a Fall of angelic beings, based on the story in Gen. 6 of the Fall of angels. The Genesis account was much expanded in later Jewish mythology, particularly Apocalyptic, and is reflected several places in the New Testament (I Cor. 11:10, I Peter 3:19-

20). The story of the Fall of Satan in Rev. 12 is also a part of this tradition, as is the emphasis on demons as sources of human suffering in the Gospels. Then there were neutral powers in the cosmos which were frequently ignorant of God's purposes (e.g. I Cor. 2:6ff). Consequently, the cosmos was subjected to futility -- according to Paul by God who subjected it in hope (Rom. 8:20). To understand the world in this way meant that when one dealt with sin one was dealing with more than how to handle one's own impulses and actions. If one keeps in mind Carl Jung's view that mythology about cosmic forces is in some sense a projection of the psyche, one has the interesting possibility of exploring the functioning and healing of the psyche in these views. For early Christianity Christ became the integrator of the cosmos (e.g. Phil. 2:5ff and Col. 1:15ff), while for Jung Christ is the archetype of the Self, the interior dynamic for integrating the psyche.

While the Hellenistic world frequently dealt with moral awareness in terms of "conscience", an inner awareness of right and wrong (such as in the inner "logos"[reason] of Stoicism), Judaism by and large dealt with it in terms of covenants and covenantal conditions provided by God. Post-Exilic Judaism moved away from a religion and morality related to inner experience to one rooted in traditions and the Mosaic Law. Thus sin primarily became the breaking of God's Law. Judaism then developed an extensive system for atoning for sin intentional and unintentional, ceremonial and moral. Repentance was important. Sacrifices should be offered. If there were offenses to others restitution should be made. The Day of Atonement was particularly important in atoning for intentional sin as was one's own death. Everything from mistakes in the Temple Liturgy to serious moral offenses needed atonement. Though there are examples of Rabbis who had a strong inner sense of sin, this approach to sin enabled one to deal with sin in terms of what one did and did not do as required by the Law. Thus Paul in Phil. 3:6 describes himself as a Pharisee "as to righteousness under the Law blameless".

Judaism's deep concern for sin was born out of her confidence in God's promise of deliverance and the tragedies of her history, producing the conclusion that if she were only more pure and righteous history would be different and God's punishments would cease. Yet the legalistic approach which she chose enabled her to avoid the serious psychological consequences which would have come with applying her awareness of sinfulness to her own internal life. The external objectivity of the Law kept guilt from being psychologically distorted, though some of the developments in Jewish interpretation of morality, particularly as regards sexuality, the "lustful glance", may be seen as attempts to control difficult aspects of the psyche. Many scholars see Romans 7 as the consequence of Paul's interiorization of morality under the impact of the moral teachings of Jesus, representing his Post-Jewish understanding of sin. Then sin could no longer be defined in terms of external obedience to the Law. When Paul began to deal with his inner life he found himself "captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members." He was led to exclaim "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Paul then begins to deal with an "inner Law", "conscience", as a way of discussing moral responsibility in the Gentile world (Rom. 1-3).

In the light of Genesis 2-3 Judaism also interpreted death's entrance into human existence and the harshness of life as due to sin and Apocalyptic Judaism, with its dualism, came to understand flesh itself as sinful.

While Jews saw sin as the primary problem of human existence, this was not so in the Greco-Roman world. Though Greco-Roman religion frequently provided for cleansings and called to moral responsibility, the basic life issues for the Greco-Roman were death and the power of Fate/Fortune. One has only to examine the Mystery religions to discover that the overcoming of death is a central theme, and such a work as the *Metamorphoses* of Lucius Apuleius well describes escaping blind Fortune and the havoc she wreaks. The priest of Isis says to Lucius:

But nonetheless Fortune in her blindness, by the very enormity of the ordeals to which she subjected thee, succeeded only in bringing thee to thy present religious felicity -- so improvident was she in her malice. Let her go now, let her give free reign to her utter fury, let her find another victim on which to exercise her cruelty. ... Now thou art safe under the protection of another

Fortune, but of one that is not blind: by the splendor with which she shines she gives light even to the other gods.⁷

As one examines the New Testament without presuppositions as to what it says, one finds interestingly enough that it reflects these different perceptions of the problems of human existence. Those pieces of literature which have been strongly affected by the Jewish background of early Christianity reflect the focus on sin and those affected by the Greco-Roman background reflect a focus on the problems of death and Fortune. An interesting example is the different emphasis of Paul and his companion Luke. It has long been noted that even in the Pauline sermons in Acts there is a conspicuous absence of emphasis on the sinfulness of humanity and need for the atonement. In Acts the focus is on the Resurrection of Jesus and the action of the Spirit. Luke evidently differed from Paul in the light of religious foci determined by his background. The same understanding, or misunderstanding from Paul's perspective, existed in the Corinthian community where Paul had to reaffirm the centrality of the cross in the face of a distorted emphasis on the Resurrection and the Spirit (see I Cor. 1,12,15).

Of special interest is the Pauline correspondence, since Paul (raised in both Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds) believes that the Gospel must be expressed in cultural terms (I Cor. 9:19ff) relevant to both Jew and Greek. Thus in Galatians 3 Paul discussed the death of Jesus in terms of the problem of sin, Jesus accepting on himself the curse pronounced on those who disobey the Law.⁸ In Col. 2:13-15, while preserving the idea that in the cross God forgives us our trespasses, he sees the cross also as an emancipation from cosmic powers... a perception particularly significant to the Greco-Roman world.

The history of the Johannine community is helpful in exploring the struggle of a Christian community with the issue of sin. In the tradition about Jesus in the Gospel of John, which is the product of developments related to the history of the Johannine community, one finds a movement away from the humanity of Jesus (Jesus comes from heaven and is going back) and away from the need of those who receive his life to participate in continuing ordinary human existence.⁹ This results in a segment of the community interpreting its tradition in a Proto-Gnostic direction. Consequently, a portion of the community breaks away, denying the fleshliness of Jesus and the significance of Jesus' death/atonement. This situation is portrayed in I John where the author denies the validity of these Gnostic views. He affirms the reality of Jesus' life and death, the continuing reality of human sin for the Christian, and the need for the atonement. We even make God a liar if we deny our sin and need for atonement (see I John 1:5-10). The struggles of the Johannine community with the need to retain an understanding of sin cautions us against a too easy dismissal of it.

There is need within Christianity for an intentional attempt to be more than biblical with regard to sin, to listen to the further guidance of God's Spirit as we try better to understand the nature of the human situation. We must be responsible to the biblical tradition, but not merely literally repeat its varied opinions which were in themselves conditioned by the traditions and perceptions of the writers. Sin represents a perception of the problem of human existence. God's revelation is not to be found in the perception of the nature of the human problem, but in God's seeking to respond to the nature of the human predicament by a process of involvement and action, especially in the Christ-event, which is rich enough to provide answers to the varied perceptions of the human problem.

⁷. (XI,15,1-4) quoted in Andre-Jean Festugiere, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks*, Los Angeles: U. of California Press, 1954, pp. 74-75.

⁸. It is interesting to explore the various ways in which Christ's death is seen as dealing with sin... e.g. curse, sin offering, Paschal lamb, etc..

⁹. This Proto-Gnostic tendency is to be found among the later developments of the Gospel tradition, especially in the discourses within the Gospel. The final author of the Gospel seems to have made the same corrections to the Gnostic tendencies as did the author of I John. At the beginning of the Gospel is placed the Prologue with the Word that becomes flesh and in chapter 20 the resurrected Jesus still bears his wounds, his humanity. Also, in chapter 1 John the Baptist announces Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

One might suggest an approach to sin along the following lines:

1. The question of sin must be approached from the perspective of grace, not introspection. We know what we are and what we need from what God had to do for us, not from what we observe when we naval-gaze. Adrian Van Kaam, has called this "transcendent reflection", we reflect on ourselves in the light of the transcendent, not in the light of ourselves. This avoids the sort of unhealthy, masochistic approach which has often been characteristic of Christianity.¹⁰
2. To speak of sin is to gain a perspective on human nature. We are capable of deceiving ourselves and doing harm, even with the best of intentions. The primary issue then is Sin, singular with a capital S, and not so much sins. All sins come from Sin. This produces a realism, but not a pessimism.
3. Sin is a psychic sign. Sins are not to be seen merely as individual acts, but as signs of what is going on with us and is within us. We need to be concerned about what they point to and less concerned about the acts of sin ... unless harm results to someone. Sins may indicate material within the psyche that has not been raised into consciousness and integrated into the Self, especially if the sin is not premeditated. Sin also indicates that we have not subjected our lives to the more creative dynamics of life, particularly God. Although sin may be dealt with as an individual act, the human predicament is not dealt with this way. It is important to deal with the origins and dynamics of our behavior.
4. We need to be careful about ranking sins as of more or less importance. There is some validity in this in terms of the harm that sin does to the sinner or to others. However, we have frequently erred in this, especially in regard to sexual sin. Jesus welcoming the prostitutes into the Kingdom of God should make us cautious. In a sense, our abhorrence of sexual sin is part of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but when examined psychologically, sexuality is an aspect of the person through which he or she expresses their psychological and biological struggles. Ranking of sins is really a diminishment of the value of the person, and what Jesus affirmed is that persons have value far beyond any judgments which we make about their sins.
5. Sin is also a symbol for what is wrong with our lives, as part of our past. It is that from which we seek escape in forgiveness. Forgiveness is then a way of being freed from our past in order to engage in growth and become new. Whether our past sin is real or imagined, it needs to be dealt with as we perceive it and thus the forgiveness provided by God's concrete act in Christ becomes very important. We need forgiveness for what we have done and been and what we have not done and been. This is somewhat the same as saying that we need God's love as a basis on which to build life, but many have difficulty appropriating love as a way of gaining freedom from the past. Forgiveness is not even a matter of discovering in our past what needs to be forgiven ... existentially we need One to accept our past, love it and forgive it, whatever it may have been.
6. We need to be sensitive to wherever awareness of sin and a sense of guilt has been imposed upon a person in his/her developmental process or is due to psychological distortion. However, one needs to deal with sin and guilt as perceived by the person, since what may not be real historically is very real as an element of the psyche.
7. We need to hear what Jungian psychology says about the "shadow" within the psyche. The elements of the psyche which are unintegrated and function autonomously and destructively can have great potential for good if their powers are in the service of the Self. Thus what makes us to sin in most cases must not be rejected in itself as sinful and refused admission into consciousness. for it will then continue to function autonomously and destructively. There is nothing more dangerous than the righteous people who claim elimination of their "sinful selves", only to drive them underground from where they can attack all those on whom they may legitimately vent their fury. Thus it becomes imperative to learn to love that which produces our "sins", as God does.

¹⁰. Adrian Van Kaam, *In Search of Spiritual Identity*, Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1975, pp. 172ff.

8. Christians have often struggled with the role of discipline and law in the handling of sin. Paul's portrayal of the history of human development, from Abraham to Christ, is helpful here (see Gal. 3:1_4:7). He sees the Mosaic Law and the cosmic structures provided by the elemental spirits as giving humans a restraining and disciplining structure until God's grace (promised in Abraham) was able to provide for a believable identity in Christ and new dynamics (the Spirit) which would allow the inner life of the person to be recreated and humans to assume a new maturity within the world. When this is applied to the development of the individual, discipline is then seen to have a role until other dynamics can become effective ... much as in mystical experience the ego is at first more active and then as the dynamics of the activity of God become more perceptible the ego becomes more passive (e.g. note the stages represented by the various dwellings in Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*, the person becoming more passive and God more active from the fourth dwelling on).¹¹

9. One needs to attempt to see the issues of human existence more broadly than merely in terms of sin and to deal with all of these issues in ministry to persons.

Because the issue of forgiveness of sin has been traditionally related to the proclamation of the Gospel, such an exploration of the meaning of sin should help us to understand the way this might be handled in contemporary evangelization and pastoral care. In turn, this provides a paradigm for rethinking other human issues to which the Gospel, and its foundation in the Christ-Event, might speak.

¹¹. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, transl. by K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez, Classics of Western Spirituality, NY: Paulist Press, 1979.

III HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

Paul is an intriguing person not only because of his significant contribution to early Christianity, but also because he has reflected on so many of the issues that one would not expect of a Christian theologian who is contemporary to the events that gave birth to Christianity. There is a great deal that could be mentioned: his reflections on the limitations of human knowledge (e.g. I Cor. 13), his making explicit his methodology for dealing with problems and providing answers (e.g. I Cor. 7), his consciousness that speaking to persons of different cultures and with different issues conditions his address (I Cor. 9:19-23), his careful distinctions about food offered to idols which provided his adherents with flexibility in relationship to their society and its practices (I Cor. 8-10), his recognition that he could be wrong but refusing to be overly introspective about the rightness of his ideas and strategies (I Cor. 4:1-5), and his unique treatment of Christology by which he attempts to retain the essence of his Jewish monotheism (I Cor. 1, 15:28 - to be discussed later). Paul also intentionally treats his theory of communication, which affects his and our understanding of evangelism. This is contained primarily in I Corinthians 1-2. I want to treat this in some detail because of its importance.

Paul's Method

I Corinthians chapters 1-4 deal with divisions in the Corinthian church. A number of scholars have indicated that foundational to the divisions was the Greek tendency to look at religious leaders as teachers of philosophical schools or rhetoricians. Followers were attracted to them by their eloquence, their competence at confirmation or refutation, the particular style and content of their presentation. The essence of Christianity thus became a product of human wisdom and eloquence. Paul argues that humans do not create the church, but the power of God inherent in the crucifixion does. Jews want a sign (display of power) and so the crucified Christ is a stumbling block; and Greeks want wisdom, and so the cross is foolishness. However, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." This is then illustrated by the humble nature of many within the Corinthian church: not many wise, powerful, of noble birth. God chose the low so that no one might boast before God. God is the source of life, therefore, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." (quoted from Jer. 9:23-24).

With this as background, Paul then informs us in I Corinthians 2 that he made a decision at Corinth not to come as one superior in speech or wisdom, but to know nothing except Christ crucified. His speech and preaching were not in words persuasive by their wisdom, but with proof of the Spirit and power so that faith might not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

What follows is now my own translation:

For to us God has made revelation through the Spirit, for the Spirit interprets all things, even the depths of God. For who among humans knows the things of a person except the spirit of a person which is within? So no one has knowledge of the things of God except the Spirit of God. And we did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God in order that we might understand those things given us by God; which things we speak about not in words which can be taught by human wisdom, but in words that can (only) be taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people. A "natural" human does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to such a one who cannot understand them because they are discerned spiritually. But the spiritual person both discerns all (such) things and is understood by no one (who does not have the Spirit). For "who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" We have the mind of Christ. (I Cor. 2:10-16 - words in parentheses added for sense)

The points Paul seems to make are as follows:

1. The way we communicate the Gospel must not get in the way of what we wish to communicate, its "power" and reality.

2. God must be working both in us and in the person to whom we communicate the Gospel for it to be understood. The communicator needs not only words but experience of what is being communicated (particularly God) and the recipient of the communication needs some referents in experience for the words used. Thus we must be open to God's working in us and be sensitive to God's working in others, helping to interpret God's presence and relationship with persons. One cannot force communication. One can only be at the service of God.

3. A primary responsibility one has is to be a person in whom God's Spirit dwells and to be open to a relationship with "the inner self of God". This means that we are not only ready to be used, but always serve as a "presence" of the realities of which we speak.

4. Our evangelism can't merely speak of the "power" of God in human life, the transformation of human problems. It must also include the meaning of the cross. The cross is a demonstration of God's love, but it also speaks of a pattern of human existence. The presence of the power of God does not magically take us out of the problems of life. What Paul says in II Cor. 4:7ff is striking:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

To this must be added Paul's consciousness of the context in which communication takes place. In I Corinthians 9:19-23 he speaks of intentionally becoming a Jew to Jews, as one outside the Law to those outside the Law, and as weak to the weak. The first two represent different cultural groups: Jew and Greco-Roman. This often has not been adequately noted when considering which of the Pauline epistles are actually by Paul. Colossians, often denied Pauline authorship, should be examined in this light. The Gospel is to be expressed within culturally conditioned terms. The third item mentioned above is especially interesting because it does not deal primarily with a cultural context, but rather with those who have a limited understanding of the full significance of the Gospel. The "weak" are discussed in I Cor. 8-11 and in Rom. 14. Paul says, "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own Master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand." (Rom. 14:1-4) Communication then is to be contextually determined, both in terms of cultural differences and individual differences which include limitations and distortions of understanding.

The significance of context always means that communication is difficult. How does one express the Gospel to those who think differently? Paul feels that it is the God-reality in the life of the communicator and the God-reality in the life of the recipient of the communication that creates an existential commonality even though words and arguments may not be clear. What the communication is about is shared by the communicator and the recipient, and the operative reality of God is active in overcoming the communication barrier. Because the communication is about the Person of God communication becomes more awareness of a shared relationship than knowledgeable explanations (remember Paul's comments about knowledge). As described in I John 1:3-4, the Christian proclamation is "so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." By the sharing of such fellowship the Christian joy is made complete.

Matthew's Model

There is another model of communication within the New Testament material, though it is not consciously developed. This is the model expressed within the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20:

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.

The Commission expresses a style of communication which is illuminated by analysis of the contents of the Gospel. To summarize this briefly, it amounts to an understanding of Christian faith and life as consisting of obeying the sayings of Jesus, "all that I have commanded you". The heart of Jesus' teachings are embodied in the Sermon on the Mount (chpts. 5-7), which modern scholarship regards as a collection of Jesus' sayings gathered for catechetical purposes. Here Jesus is portrayed as a new Moses giving a new Torah from a new mount. The sayings are supported by the authority given Jesus (Matt. 11:25ff and Matt. 28:18) and the authority given Peter as his representative (Matt. 16:13ff) These commandments are to be taught and observed. This observation is to be maintained by the exercise of a discipline within the Matthaean religious community (Matt. 18:15ff).

In terms of Jungian personality types, the approach is that of one who uses "thinking" as a rational process. Communication can take place by telling persons what is true and what should be done, and by supporting this with adequate authority. It is no accident that Mark's understanding of the mystery and difficulty of coming to faith¹² is simplified in Matt. 13, the responsibility for lack of faith being placed squarely on people's blindness and dullness. It is almost as if Matthew felt that if the communication was clear it should be understood and accepted. It is important to recognize that the church's understanding of evangelization is frequently taken from Matthew 28. This may have an appeal to other "thinkers", but it does not provide an adequate understanding of communication.

¹². See chpt. 5 on "Coming to Faith" where there is a discussion of Mark 4.