

“EXTEND HOSPITALITY TO STRANGERS” — A MISSIOLOGY OF THEOLOGIA CRUCIS

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Possibility of a stranger-centred theology

The theme for this lecture, “extend hospitality to strangers,” is taken from St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans 12:13. The New Testament word for “hospitality” is “philoxenia,” to love strangers. One of the most remarkable stories in the Bible is Abraham’s hospitality to the travelling “Three Persons” at Mamre (Gen. 18:1-8) The New Testament comments:

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it (Heb.13:2).

The incident of Abraham has been immortalized by the fifteenth century great icon of Holy Trinity painted by Rublev for the monastery of the Trinity and St Sergius of the Russian Orthodox Church. The biblical tradition upholds “extending hospitality to strangers.” In this paper I would like to suggest a stranger-centred theology. Theology to be authentic must be constantly challenged, disturbed and stirred up by the presence of strangers. When I say this I feel immediately an acutely embarrassing gap between the theme of this paper and our everyday life. The Union Theological Seminary Community Handbook of 1992 opens with a chapter on “Community Security,” which says, “Never open a door to someone you don’t recognize,” “Even if your door is self-locking, your apartment will not be secure unless you use the key to turn the deadbolt.” How do we reconcile the biblical exhortation, “extend hospitality to strangers” with our life, which in nearly every aspect is so well symbolized by the ubiquitous deadbolts?

The seminary community’s response to this challenge is to invite “every person connected with the institution — staff, students, alumni, administration, faculty, board members, partners — to participate in a carefully planned immersion into a local community of citizens actively involved in changing their social, economic, religious or political environments.” The 1993 academic calendar has been adjusted to allocate time to do this. Eight concrete immersion themes have been advertised to the whole community: (1) Wall Street (2) Korean/African American Race Issues, (3) Public Schools, (4) Health Care/Power Issues, (5) Harlem Initiatives Community Organizing, (6) Housing/Homelessness and AIDS-related issues, (7) Action for Community Empowerment, and (8) Manhattan Borough President Office. I trust that there

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will be an increasing number of M.Div. theses related to these themes of local immersion. The decision of the seminary, an educational institution, to invest time and resources in this undertaking is a demonstration of its response to the painful gap it feels in its soul.

“Stranger” (*xenos*) means someone who is “foreign,” “alien,” “appearing strange” and “creating distaste.” Do you feel distaste when you hear English spoken with an accent? Stranger is cited even as enemy (Isa. 29:5). Paradoxically, however, the stranger can become the guest if we can overcome the fear of the hostile alien by way of making friendship. Thus, the stranger carries a possibility of future reciprocal hospitality. The stranger is not welcome but fascinating. This is “the magical power of what is foreign.”¹ Do you feel fascinated when you hear English spoken with an accent? According to *The Odyssey* of Homer, the quality of civilization can be decided by its attitude towards strangers (Bk. 9:175). The quality of religion is also determined by its attitude towards strangers.

I am not advocating a condescending ethics of the bourgeoisie mentality or a sentimental moral perfectionism. It is patently not easy to invite to your dinner party “the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind” instead of “your friends or your brothers, or your relatives or rich neighbours” (Luke 14:12-14). The way of extending hospitality to the stranger may even become the way towards martyrdom (Phil. 2:8). Christ was crucified because he extended hospitality to strangers so completely. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., Steve Biko, Oscar Romero . . . suffered martyrdom following the way of Christ’s extending hospitality to strangers. Martyrdom suffered because of extending hospitality to strangers is profoundly Christ-like. That is why this lecture is named “Missiology of *Theologia Crucis*.”

In truth, this apostolic instruction is prefaced by these solemn words:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Rom. 12:1).

Our “extending hospitality to strangers” happens “by the mercies of God,” and when this happens our life becomes a “living sacrifice,” which is “holy and acceptable to God,” and it is an essential part of our “spiritual worship.” There is a living connection between “extending hospitality to strangers” and “loving your God and loving your neighbour” (Mark 12:28-34) of which Christ says “there is no other commandment greater than these” (See: Mark 12:31). And his directive to love enemies (Matt. 5:44) is the ultimate of extending hospitality to strangers.

There is a striking suggestion in the New Testament that Christ himself is a stranger. In the fifty-third chapter of *The Rule of St Benedict* (written in 540) we read, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matt. 25:35). When Christ himself is presented as the stranger “who needs to be fed, clothed and visited,” the gospel suggests a revolutionary displacement of “the centre.”

Christ the centre-person comes to us in the true form of a periphery-person. "For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate" (The Nicene Creed). This is the fundamental element of the gospel which St Paul calls "scandalous" (I Cor. 1:23). It is scandalous because it exposes and challenges the human sense of power-structure and prestige system (Col. 2:15). Christ is "scandalous" because he, the physician, came "to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:15-17). It is this scandalous Christ who has the power to destroy our self-idolatrous centre-complex. The gospel radically disturbs our hierarchical distribution of power and prestige. A "hierarchy-in-reverse" is consonant with the mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 5-11).

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you, rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves (Luke 22:25-26).

This is the basic orientation of *theologia crucis*. The key insight of Luther's *theologia crucis* is that the true knowledge of God comes from the knowledge of the suffering of Jesus Christ. This happened concretely when Christ loved strangers and gave his life for them (Rom. 5:6-8). The "form of Christ" (Gal. 4:19) is the form of "extending hospitality to strangers." This form is the essence of the Christian gospel. It is the vision of ecumenism. It is that which inspires Christian mission. Mission is "extending hospitality to strangers."

The faith of Israel said it this way:

You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry, my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans (Ex. 22:21-24).

This extraordinary thought cultivates and expands the horizon of the human soul. It is derived from a theologically informed experience of conversion (*metanoia*). It reveals the truth about the creation and maintenance of shalom (wholesomeness, well-being, integrity) in human community. "You shall not oppress a resident alien," a socially marginal people. This command has remained relevant throughout the history of human civilization, and it is becoming even more significant in our own day as the number of uprooted people from political and racial oppression, inhuman poverty and ethnic conflict, civil war and natural disaster has been steadily increasing.

For the *theologia crucis* the Exodus text cited is important (see also, Lev. 19:34. Deut. 10:19). The passage is related to the great story of the Crossing of the Red Sea in which the salvation of the helpless Israelites was achieved by a miraculous intervention of God, the experience Emil Fackenheim calls in his *God's Presence in History*, "the root experience." According to him, the crossing was "an historic event affecting decisively all future Jewish generations" (p. 10). Perhaps Egyptians did not "extend hospitality to the stranger (resident alien) Israel." Israel cried to God (Ex. 3:7). God's wrath burned and

destroyed the army of Egypt, the soldiers' wives became widows, and their children orphans.

But the *theologia crucis*, inspired by the thought that "he (Christ) saved others; he cannot save himself" (Mark 15:31), cannot end with the song, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (Ex. 15: 1). Ancient Israel, meditating upon the resident aliens living among them in the light of its own previous experience of having been resident aliens (*ger* in Hebrew, *proselutos* in Septuagint) in Egypt strikes me with a spiritual force more meaningful and universal than the root experience Fackenheim named.

Israel reaches a higher plain in the moving words of Exodus 23:9: "You shall not oppress a resident alien. You know the heart of an alien for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

This is in line with the Servant Songs in the Book of Isaiah and the words of the prophet Micah urging Israel, in the name of God, "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). Israel's contemplation on their relationship with the stranger offers us a relevant evangelical counsel. It is an ancient vision of "extending hospitality of strangers." It is the beginning of mission and ecumenism.

After five thousand years of throwing each other "into the sea," the *consensus hominum* is that this must come to an end. "You shall not kill" (Ex. 20:13). The story of the passover night in which all the first-born of the Egyptians, then even to the domestic animals, were destroyed by the hand of God disturbs us when we think of Fackenheim's "root experience." This story of genocide presents an agonizing ecumenical and theological problem. Was it necessary and justifiable? Was it not overkill? (Ex. 12:29-30). How are we to interpret this massacre? Is not Exodus 23:9 more in line with the passage in the gospel, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36) than the story of the passover night? Speaking from his African soul, Steve Biko writes: "We do not believe that God can create people only to punish them eternally after a short period on earth."²

Theologia crucis agrees with this deep African theological emotion. It is the theology of "extending hospitality to strangers" as the Lamb of God did. It rejects the language of threat. It proclaims the ultimate power of self-giving love (*hesed*, *agape*).

The only way open to us to stop the violence of genocide in our world is the *via eminentia* of "extending hospitality to strangers" as the Lamb of God did. Humanity has been aware of this, with or without the biblical instruction. The great documents in the history of the human soul, such as the Magna Carta (1215), the Bill of Rights (1689), the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Earth Covenant (1992) express the spirit of the Exodus text on the treatment of the stranger. "Ex-Egypt" is a possibility, but "Ex-Earth" is not. Humanity must now learn to live together since there is no other way (Gal. 5: 15).

The stranger-centred theology expresses the spirit of the biblical faith and it is rooted in the church's understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Missiology of theologia crucis:

The aim of mission is the creation of community centred by the peripherized Christ for all people. Christ creates the *koinonia* (communion, contribution, fellowship, partnership, sharing, participation). In the mind of St Paul, the *koinonia* is based on the suffering of Christ. "The bread that we break, is it not a sharing (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ? (I Cor. 10:16). In *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper No. 111, World Council of Churches, 1982) we read: "The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world."

In the eucharistic *koinonia* the community of faith is representing the whole world. Christ's way of extending hospitality to strangers must be the way for the whole world. In the *koinonia* of the self-giving Christ there is no struggle between unity and diversity. Both unity and diversity are signs of the blessing of God as manifested in the Body of Christ. ". . . we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one body" (v. 17). The missiology of *theologia crucis* aims to create the *koinonia* of the whole creation.

The seventh assembly of the World Council of Churches (Canberra, February 1991) expanded the theological orientation of the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document:

The unity of the church to which we are called is a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation.³

The ecumenical movement is a movement towards a fuller conciliar communion as an expression of the apostolic *koinonia*. In the *koinonia* theology, theologies of "extending hospitality to strangers" and that of "sharing in the body of Christ" are inseparable. Both nourish Christian missiology. But how can we speak about "sharing in the body of Christ" without first "extending hospitality to the stranger"? (Isa. 52:7. Rom. 10:14f).

Minority theologies extend hospitality to strangers. People of economic, racial and political minorities are themselves strangers. Blacks, womanists, feminists, native Americans, Latin American liberationists . . . are resident aliens. They have brought into the theological discussion the voices of those who have been ignored for centuries. Black theology is a stranger-centred theology. It brings the life experience of the most marginal population to the centre of their theological concern. For too long the church had not extended hospitality to strangers' theologies, including even woman's experience and expression of

the Christian faith. Aylward Shorter, the Catholic missionary theologian, writes:

For nearly sixteen centuries, from late Roman times until our own, a monocultural view of the world held sway among bishops, theologians and thinkers of the Catholic Church. . . . When classical Graeco-Roman philosophy came to be applied to the truths of revelation during the high Middle Ages, the immutability of the Christian cultural ideal was sealed.⁴

In our time, after 1600 years, both the “bottle” (cultural container) and the “wine” (substance of the gospel itself) are seriously examined by those who want to extend hospitality to strangers. Minority theologies are challenging the theological interpretations, formulations, symbolization and liturgies of the dominant groups which have long been colonially and monoculturally presented and accepted. Their critical studies probe to the essence of the biblical faith itself.

Thus the horizon of theology has been suddenly expanded. But the church is still not entirely sure whether it should extend hospitality to these theological resident aliens when they dare to attack “the immutability of the Christian cultural ideal.” It has not fed and clothed these theological resident aliens when they were hungry and naked.

I have suggested that the stranger is a crucial key to the understanding of the gospel. *Philoxenia* is the way of *theologia crucis*. Christian theology will remain meaningful only as long as it takes the stranger seriously. Now, let us focus on what it means to “extend hospitality to strangers” in the inter-religious context. This will give us an important example for our stranger-centred theology. I realize that this subject is by itself overwhelming. What I am intending to do is only to sketch how the apostolic exhortation may be brought into the discussions we have as we live in a religiously plural world.

The stranger-centred theology in the inter-religious context

The religions have been a persistent element in the conscious separation of groups from one another. One point eight billion Christians in the world today are strangers to 950 million Muslims who, in turn, are strangers to 300 million Buddhists. There is a sense of mutual alienation among peoples of different religions. Intra-religion divisions are plentiful also. We hear a familiar confession, “I was brought up as a Presbyterian who tended to regard Catholics as ignorant, dirty, dishonest and often drunken!”⁵ Within “one” religion there are many religions. Intra-religious differences are as complex as inter-religious differences. So far I am thinking of the world religions, the youngest of which is Islam.

To this map, we should add what the 1986 conference sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches calls “New Religious Movements.” Harold Turner, dean of a worldwide study of New Religious Movements, noting the amazing proliferation of these movements in

our days, writes, "the world has never seen more religious innovation and creativity than in the second half of the present century."⁶

Let me list some of the new religious movements: Theosophical Society, Trancendental Meditation (TM), Divine Light Mission of Maharaj-ji, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh Society, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Erhard Seminars Training (EST), Soka Gakkai, Unification Church, Rastafarians, The Voodoo, New Age Movement, Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Latter-Day Saints, The Worldwide Church of God, the Christian Science, The Baha'i, and so on. I am simply calling to your attention that the religious life of humanity today is far more varied and chaotic than a scholarly paper on the concept of the Buddhist nirvana compared with that of the Christian kingdom of God based on the critical study of the respective texts.

Living in the "Rush Hour of the Gods" (MacFarland), how should Christians hear the apostolic exhortation, "extend hospitality to the stranger"? Does it mean to be open to all kinds of religious teachings and experiences of salvation? It is reported that Mircea Eliade, in one of the last interviews he gave before his death, called for our openness to recognize the sacred wherever it appears: "It is quite possible that some day we will see absurd, strange things, appearing which may well be new expressions of the experience of the sacred."⁷ Harold Turner suspects that human history would have been considerably different if Christians had taken new religious movements, such as that of Muhammad in Arabia in the seventh century, and the Taiping Revolution in China in the nineteenth century more positively.⁸ He also makes an observation that "from secular historical, phenomenological and sociological points of view the Christian church was another religious movement."⁹

Must we extend our hospitality to the followers of these "strange" religions? If the aim of mission is the creation of the koinonia of the whole of humanity centred by the peripherized Christ, what should be our attitude towards people of other faiths? Christians are generally hostile towards the followers of other world faiths and particularly against those of the new religious movements, which are still pejoratively called "sects," "cults," "heresies" or "deviations."

Hence, one Christian response would be "do not extend hospitality to the people of sects, cults, heresies and deviation." After all, false teachers, pseudo-prophets and other mendicants abused the hospitality of Christians (Didache 12). One may go back to the Nehemiah tradition that demands separation of the people of God from strangers. Some of us may quote the words of St Paul, "I do not want you to be partners with demons. . . . You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (I Cor. 10:20f).

But the demons here are the spirit of idolatry. There is the table of the Lord and the table of idolatry. The apostle urges that Christians must be keenly aware of the perils of idolatry. "Flee from the worship of idols" (I Cor.10:14). If you reject idolatry, then, you can truly "extend hospitality to strangers." This connection is missiologically important. Our attention should not be so much

with condemnation of the Unification Church or Krishna Consciousness, but with the “fleeing from the worship of idols.” Idolatry can take place in Christian life as easily as in the life of the followers of Muhammad or of Christian Science. Before we speak against the people of the Krishna Consciousness, we should tell ourselves to “flee from the worship of idols.”

Should not Christians extend hospitality only to Christians or “good people” who are not deviates? This position would imply that sixty-four percent of the world population of 5.3 billion are at the table of the demons, while “Christians” are not! Scholars tell us that the world population will be 6.35 billion in 2000, and 30 billion by the end of the twenty-first century. In *The Devastation of the Indies* by Bartolome de Las Casas (1552), we read:

Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to sell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies (Tr. Herma Briffault).

Self-idolatry of “insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world” distorts and destroys the gospel of the Christ to whom people came “from every quarter,” who ate “with sinners and tax collectors” and who was crucified between two thieves (Mark 1:45, 2:16, 15:27). Commenting on the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23-35), Reinhold Niebuhr writes:

Forgiving love is a possibility only for those who know that they are not good, who feel themselves in need of divine mercy, who live in a dimension deeper and higher than that of moral idealism, feel themselves as well as their fellow men convicted of sin by a holy God and know that the differences between the good man and the bad man are insignificant in his sight.¹⁰

Theologia crucis remembers that what is important in our sight can be “insignificant in his sight” (See: I Sam. 16:7). Encouraged by Bartolome de Las Casas and Reinhold Niebuhr, I am ready to make a certain methodological suggestion. In the context of “extending hospitality to the people of different religious persuasions,” we must primarily look at our human reality, both personal and collective, and not at the doctrinal or institutional aspects of the religions.

The human reality of Buddhist people who may feel jealousy should be the primary point of concern, not abstract Buddhism, which cannot be troubled by jealousy. Muslims, who think, speak, eat, sleep, meditate, marry, divorce, laugh, cry, complain, pray, fast, etc., are the central reality, not Islam. Christians, who can be people of “insatiable greed and ambition,” should be taken up as the primary reality, not some doctrinal or institutional formulation of Christianity, such as the two natures of Christ or the Papacy or Presbyterian polity. I would suggest that we should apply the same methodology to the people of new religious movements. Our primary interest should be with the human reality of Transcendental Meditators, not the doctrinal and ideological message of Transcendental Meditation.

Still, however, a difficult problem persists. What, precisely, is the relationship between Buddhism and Buddhist, and Islam and Muslims, and so on? The answer does not come easily. Buddhism is a body of moral and religious teaching. It has expressed itself through its elaborate system of symbols and institutions, and it has created one of the great civilizations of humanity. The same thing could be said about Christianity and Islam.

Obviously there would be no Buddhists apart from Buddhism. There would be no Catholic faithful apart from the papacy. Yet it is not Buddhism but Buddhists who make Buddhist culture and civilization. There is no such possibility as "Buddhism by itself" or "the Papacy by itself." Buddhism cannot speak to Christianity, but Buddhists can. Inter-religious dialogue is between Buddhists and Christians, not between Buddhism and Christianity. Not for the sake of Christianity, but "for our sake" Christ gave his life. The concept of a world of plural religious truths is a theoretical construction, one step distanced from humanity's religious life. Apart from the concreteness of the people whose lives demonstrate plural religious truths, it would be pure abstraction.

Seen from the angle of this methodology, we find ourselves, whatever our religious commitments, to be much alike. I am saying that human beings who call themselves Buddhists or Hindus or Christians or Transcendental Meditators are alike, for instance, in their greediness or in their self-righteousness. To say that Buddhists are less greedy or self-righteous than Christians, or to suggest the opposite, would plainly contradict what we experience. In the people of other religions, we see, to our embarrassment, undesirable parts of ourselves. This may be one of the reasons why we hate other religions.

Though Christians passionately recite "terrible things" of other religions, the human reality of greed and self-righteousness is indisputably there across the board.

. . . in passing judgement on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things (Rom. 2:1, see Matt. 7:3).

Thus for Christians, the need for repentance (*metanoia*) appears in the context of inter-religious dialogue. We must renounce our centuries-old "teacher's complex." The proclamation of the gospel and teacher's complex do not go together. In *metanoia* we accept Jesus' words, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:3). In 1934 Reinhold Niebuhr wrote:

There is no deeper pathos in the spiritual life of man than the cruelty of righteous people. If any one idea dominates the teachings of Jesus, it is his opposition to the self-righteousness of the righteous.¹¹

Christians' understanding of the people of other religions, then, begins with Christians' own repentance. Only when we repent, can we truly "extend hospitality to strangers." In *metanoia* we will see the universal sin of greed and self-righteousness in ourselves as well as in others. We must not simply be against Voodoo or Scientology, but against greed and self-righteousness that

are found in all human religious realities including Voodoo and Scientology. Christian criticism of greed and self-righteousness comes from the venerable tradition of Israel and the church, at the centre of which stands the crucified Christ. Paul Tillich will help us to understand how Christ stands here:

. . . he accepts the title "Christ" when Peter offers it to him. He accepts it under the one condition that he has to go to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, which means to deny the idolatrous tendency even with respect to himself. This is at the same time the criterion of all other symbols, and it is the criterion to which every Christian church should subject itself.¹²

I would suggest that this should become the criterion of the symbols of all religions. This is a scandalous criterion because it is a crucified criterion, a criterion of radical self-denial. It is the criterion that *theologia crucis* upholds. In the light of this criterion, I am bold to examine the truth about the visit of the Japanese emperor Akihito to China (Oct. 1992) when he expressed only sadness but not an apology to the Chinese people for the wartime atrocities in which 20 million people were injured or killed. In the absence of genuine repentance it is difficult to restore a healthy international relationship.

Still a number of questions persist. Will not the *theologia crucis* orientation encourage the syncretism of religions? Does it have a strong evangelism thrust? Is it not too "romantic" about inter-religious realities? Must we not decisively reject the way of salvation by religions other than Christianity? What is the position of the stranger-centred theology on the "kidnapping and deprogramming of the captives of the Moonies"? When Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh says that Christianity is "death-oriented"; when the Japanese True Light Religion (Mahikari) says that it was Jesus' brother, not Jesus himself, who was crucified; when the Unification Church claims that it is re-populating the world with a new sinless humanity by way of mass weddings, should Christians remain silent? How are we to respond to the financial and moral messes involving a number of religious bodies?

It is imperative for Christians to publicly state what they believe. This is an essential part of "extending hospitality to strangers." Missiology of *theologia crucis* must make it clear how the teaching of Buddhism or that of the Scientology differ from the Christian proclamation. Thus the study of Christian theology becomes a constant responsibility of every Christian. The *theologia crucis* inspires the Christian act of clarification, which safeguards Christianity from becoming indiscriminately confused with different doctrines.

But still we have uneasy stirrings within us. Is it not a part of evangelism to attack and even anathematize other religious teachings? "Woe to you, the Taoists, Muslims and Moonies . . .!" Does not evangelism require some negative campaigning? How can we speak positively about our own faith unless we speak negatively of others? Is it not essential in our evangelism to expose all of their unclean spirits, and promote our own clean spirits? Does not the biblical theology support this? Has such missionary activity not been precious Christian tradition practised from ancient times, and with a particular boldness

throughout the whole world since the event of Columbus in 1492? Do we not evangelize the world because there is no other name than that of Jesus Christ through which the world can find its salvation? Exactly 200 years ago, in what might be called his “Overseas Mission Manifesto,” the great Baptist missionary William Carey based his missiology on the understanding that

Before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ the whole world were either heathens, or Jews; and both, as to the body of them, were enemies to the gospel.¹³

This is a clear and powerful position. Does it represent our missiology today? Is this where we stand after the painful and confusing history of the west’s expansive colonialism in Asia and Africa, after the event of the Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago one hundred years ago, after Hiroshima and the Jewish Holocaust fifty years ago, after the two world wars in this century, after the gigantic population explosion, and in the ecological crisis we find ourselves in today? Does our dedication to mission and evangelism derive from the theology that those who are not Christians are “enemies of the gospel”?

And how can we appeal to Christian congregations for support of “overseas mission/evangelism work” if we do not tell them that “people over there” are living in darkness, and need their help?

It is, according to the apostolic faith, the Spirit of Christ that energizes our evangelistic proclamation. I doubt strongly whether the idea that “people over there are enemies of God” is central to the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ does not support the spirit of greed to conquer others and self-righteousness to demonstrate our own superior piety. The gospel-message is not a human creation (Gal. 1:1f). The message is that in Jesus Christ, God extended hospitality to strangers to an unimaginable extent and to an unsearchable depth (Rom. 11:33). This must be the Spirit of Christ today as well as 2000 years ago. Our appeal to congregations for support of mission/evangelism work must be presented in terms of the theology of “extending hospitality to strangers,” which is the essence of the gospel, and not in terms of the damnation of the heathens who are seen as the “enemies to the gospel.”

How does the missiology of “extending hospitality to strangers” understand the 18th Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The 18th Article, which expresses the western liberal Enlightenment spirit is, in fact, being violated every moment. Religious passion cannot be tamed by these cool rational words. How do the spirit of the European Enlightenment and the Christian theology of repentance intersect? This is a challenging problem, particularly for those who live in the United States, whose political philosophy was much influenced by Enlightenment thought.

The 18th Article protects the "freedom to change," for instance, from Islam to Christianity, and vice versa. Change of religion takes place only as a result of complex factors: cultural, social, political, psychological, racial, and so on. Conversion to any religion is of little substance unless it brings some liberation from greed and self-righteousness to the life of the convert.

Christians may insist that the change which is crucial is the change from the allegiance to Muhammad to Christ. But what is the substance of allegiance to Christ? Does not Christ emancipate humanity from the power of greed and self-righteousness? Or shall we draw a sharp line between Christian faith and greed/self-righteousness, and declare that they have nothing to do with each other? While it is true that the gospel is the power that saves us in spite of our greed and self-righteousness, the fruit of our salvation will be seen in the evidence of the destruction of greed and self-righteousness in our lives. This must be true if we insist on the historical-ness of the Christian faith. The destruction of greed and self-righteousness must be historically demonstrated. Greed and self-righteousness, of course, are not the only universal problems that religions recognize. It is true, however, that all of the great world religions take them seriously. Buddhism is centred on the problem of greed, and Christianity on that of self-righteousness. In my view, it is these two factors that are destroying the shalom of human life upon the earth.

If this is true, the primary focus of Christian meditation in the inter-religious discourse must be upon human greed and self-righteousness. Saying this, I do not mean that, in every inter-religious situation, we should immediately address these issues. But it is important to know deep in our hearts the seriousness of human disintegration caused by these two forces. In fact, these two forces are one force, since wherever there is greed there is self-righteousness, and vice versa. Where there is greed or self-righteousness, there is idolatry. "Flee from the worship of idols."

How difficult it is to "flee from the worship of idols"! It is with the deep sense of repentance that Christians "extend hospitality to strangers." In this context of hospitality, Christian critique of the Christian religion and of other religions can be both sharp and meaningful. "For God shows no partiality" (Rom. 2:11). This is the backbone of the missiology of *theologia crucis* in the inter-religious context.

The stranger-centred theology inspires a new ecumenical movement based on the Christian theology of repentance. Repentance (*metanoia*) is a creative moment in which missiology of *theologia crucis* begins. In repentance, we can truly "extend hospitality to strangers." This is the spirit of the stranger-centred missiology.

NOTES

¹ G. Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. v, p. 3.

² S. Biko, *I Write What I Like*, p. 44.

³ *Signs of the Spirit*, p. 173. See also Aram Keshishian, *Conciliar Fellowship*, pp. xv, 81.

⁴ A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, p. 18.

⁵ A.R. Brockway and J.P. Rajashekar, *New Religious Movements and the Churches*, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰ R. Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, p. 139.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹² P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p. 67.

¹³ W. Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, 1792, p. 14.



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