

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CANADA - ÉGLISE UNIVERSELLE DE DIEU, CANADA

NORTHERN LIGHT

SHARING OUR STORY

JANUARY - MARCH 2010



Introduction à la théologie trinitaire basée sur Christ

A Brief Introduction To Trinitarian Theology

Peace-As It Is In Heaven

Blessed Are The Peacemakers

Hands Across Eternity

1

He knew before there was a time, that Time was in his hands;
he chose the plot of history before he made a lamb.
Determining our place in time to come before he'd made a "place",
he saw through corridors of time, our meeting, face to face.
Provision; forgiveness; was the theme before we knew a voice;
e're world's foundations ever "laid", his hands, had known his choice.
T'was all for love, as he is love; the angels, bow to laud --
to worship, time, and after time, this coming Lamb of God.

2

He saw before him, Adam's sin, and suffering; pain; hurt
because he couldn't save himself -- this man he'd made of dirt.
"Abram", he said. "Go". Abraham went. He gave the promised son.
Through Isaac; Jacob; David -- on, the Son of God was born.
Fruit of her womb by God's Spirit sown, he would in a manger lay.
He'd need to be changed; he'd need to be fed -- like all other babies that way.
The things he did; the words he spoke -- all became a part
of who he was -- who he would become. Mary kept them in her heart.

3

As elder brother to siblings at home; breadwinner, when Joseph was gone,
he learned how to love; to play with a child; how to help his mother at home.
No stranger to hurts; tears, with those hands, he'd wiped from many an eye.
He knew how to cook; how to read from a scroll -- he wasn't ashamed to cry.
He used those dear hands on timber; stone; from quarry and forest, he'd hew.
And day after day, and year after year, more swarthy and stalwart he grew.
This carpenter built, in Mid-Eastern sun; knew hard work and labor the same.
He'd get dirty, and sweat; rest in the eve -- til "time" for his purpose came.

4

He chose his 12, taught them day after day, spread Good News sea to sea,
told of a New Covenant be made in his blood for everyone, e're then, or to be.
Betrayed by one whose feet he had washed, he prayed til he sweated blood,
the cup with my sins, which he became, be spared him, yet he understood.
Decisions, made, would ever be kept; he, as human, could now feel our loss.
Saw beyond time til time he'd return, he'd known, he'd be nailed to a cross.
Communion we take, his body and blood, by grace, on tundra, or sands,
Eternity gone; Eternity, come. Our sins were nailed, under -- those hands.

By Camay M. Achtemichuk
March 22, 2008

Blessed Are The Peacemakers

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

When I hear the word, "peace" two things immediately come to mind. First, my teen years, and the popular greeting at the time of the Vietnam war, where the sign of the **V**, (popularized by Winston Churchill during the Second World War to mean victory), was changed in the 1960's to symbolize, "peace." (*My daughter tells me that this sign now has a totally different meaning in Britain.*)

Secondly, the movie *Miss Congeniality* when the character played by Sandra Bullock, an undercover FBI agent, who becomes a contestant in a beauty contest, is asked, "What is the one most important thing our society needs?" Her reply, "That would be harsher punishment for parole violators....And, world peace."

I think "world peace" is something most people desire, but, it is safe to say people don't always agree on how we will get there. Instead, we even have conflicts over what "peace" means. A friend of mine once said, "It seems that we will never have "peace" until everyone has a "piece" of what someone else owns!"

This issue of *Northern Light* takes a look at Jesus' words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). We are called to be "peacemakers" but what does that mean in our day-to-day walk as a Christian? *The Message* gives us a bit of a clue in its rendering of this passage: "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family."

As the article *Peacemakers* by Gary Moore (see page 18) explains, peace is very much a part of the relationship within the Godhead and the relationship that God wants with us. Peace is also something that God wants us to share with others.

This issue also includes the first installment of **A Brief Introduction To Trinitarian Theology** which is a publication from our denomination's international office in the United States. The final installment will follow in the next issue of *Northern Light*.

As we approach the time when the Church commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, may his peace be always present in your life. **NL**

Bill Hall

A Brief Introduction To Trinitarian Theology 2

Theology, simply stated, is "God knowledge." Our personal understanding of theology consists of whatever we believe to be true about God.



Introduction à la théologie trinitaire basée sur Christ 9

La mission de Communion Internationale dans la Grâce (CIG) consiste à participer avec Jésus-Christ à la vie et au partage de l'Évangile.

Peace—As It Is In Heaven 21

An argument broke out in heaven. A recently-arrived preacher complained that a Toronto taxi cab driver was rewarded with a higher place than he.

A Brief Introduction To Trinitarian Theology	2
Director's Desk	18
Theme Articles	20
Commentary	29
National News	30
The Last Word	31

FRONT COVER: The dove and the olive branch, or a dove carrying an olive branch in its beak, are ancient symbols of peace.
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Northern Light magazine is the official magazine of the Worldwide Church of God, Canada. It exists to share the stories of our members and congregations on their Christian journey. Northern Light does this by featuring articles that encourage, nurture and inform.

Le magazine Northern Light est le magazine officiel de l'Église universelle de Dieu, au Canada. Il sert à raconter les histoires de nos membres et de nos assemblées tout le long de leur voyage chrétien, au moyen d'articles qui encouragent, nourrissent et informent.

A Brief Introduction To

Trinitarian Theology

Theology, simply stated, is “God knowledge.” Our personal understanding of theology consists of whatever we believe to be true about God.

In one way or another, we all have a theology. And certainly every church and denomination has a theology. It’s the framework that undergirds and informs their doctrines and practices.

“Trinitarian theology” is a particular approach to theology that sees the Trinity, as revealed in Jesus Christ, not merely as one point of doctrine, but rather as the central and foundational doctrine that forms the basis for how we read the Bible and how we understand all points of theology.

Trinitarian theology deals with not only the “how” and the “why” of doctrines and practices, but most importantly, it begins with the “who.” Trinitarian theology asks, “Who is the God made known in Jesus Christ, and who are we in relation to him?”

The Bible confronts us with a God who has chosen to make himself known and to actually be with us and for us in person, in Jesus Christ. That means we cannot look outside of Jesus to understand who God is. In Jesus we meet God as God really is, as the God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who is *for us*.

When we meet Jesus, we find that he introduces us to his heavenly Father. In his words and actions we hear and see that the Father loves us unconditionally. He sent Jesus not out of anger and a need to punish someone, but out of his immeasurable love and his unbending commitment to human redemption. When we meet Jesus in the Bible we find that he also introduces us to his Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, who is also at work to bring to our attention the reconciling ministry of God.

“Trinitarian theology,” then, does not

simply refer to a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. It refers to believing in this Triune God and recognizing that this doctrine, which points to who the God of the Bible really is, lies at the heart of all other doctrines and forms the basis for how we understand everything we read in Scripture.

Christ-centered

Trinitarian theology is first and foremost Christ-centered. It tells us that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, has become one with our flesh in order to be our saving substitute and to represent us as his brothers and sisters in the very presence of the Father. It tells us that, in Christ, we belong to the Father and that we are the beloved of the Father.

Trinitarian theology is first and foremost Christ-centered.

This means that the Christian life and faith are primarily about four kinds of personal *relationships*. 1) the internal relationships of holy love shared by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit from all eternity 2) the relationship of the eternal Son with humanity in Jesus Christ incarnate. 3) the relationship of humanity with the Father graciously given to us through the Son and by the Spirit, and 4) the relationship of humans with one another as children of the Father redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Trinitarian theology is *Trinitarian* in that it begins with the understanding that the *one* God exists eternally in the union and communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Trinitarian theology is Christ-centered in that it focuses on the centrality and pre-eminence of Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures: the Son of God in the flesh, one with the Father and the Spirit; and one with all humanity.

As noted by Thomas F. Torrance (a prin-

icipal Trinitarian theologian of the 20th century), Jesus is both the *ground* (foundation/origin) and the *grammar* (organizing principle/logic) of the Godhead and of the entire created order—all humanity included. So everything ought to be understood in relationship to him.

Jesus indicates that he is even the key to understanding Scripture. He said to a group of Jewish religious leaders in John 5:39-40: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” We seek to read and interpret the Bible through the lens of who Jesus is. So, he is the basis and logic of our theology—for he alone is the *final* and the *full* self-revelation of God.

Early history

Trinitarian theology formed the basis of Christian teaching. This is reflected in the early Christian Creeds. Early prominent Trinitarian teachers and theologians included Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzus.

Irenaeus (died A.D. 202) was a disciple of Polycarp (who had studied with the apostle John). Irenaeus sought to show that the gospel of salvation taught by the apostles and handed down from them is centered on Jesus. He saw that the Bible presents the Incarnation as a new point of beginning for humanity (see Ephesians 1:9-10, 20-23). Through the Incarnation, the entire human race was “born again” in Jesus. In Jesus, humanity has a new beginning and a new identity.

The biblical foundation of Irenaeus’ thinking included Paul’s statements in Romans 5, where Jesus is presented to us as the “second” (or “final”) Adam of the human race. “In Jesus,” wrote Irenaeus, “God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man [Adam], that He might kill sin, deprive death of its

power, and vivify man..." (*Against Heresies*, III.18.7).

Irenaeus understood that Jesus took all humanity into himself and renewed the human race through his *vicarious* (representative and substitutionary) life, death, resurrection and ascension.

Irenaeus taught that this renewing, or re-creating, of the human race in Jesus through the Incarnation is not merely a work done "by" Jesus. Rather, our salvation involves much more than just the forgiveness of our sins. It means our entire re-creation "in" and "through" Jesus.

Athanasius (died A.D. 373) defended the gospel against false teachers (including Arius) who denied the Son's eternal divinity. This defense led to the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity affirmed at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. In his treatise *On the Incarnation*, section 20, Athanasius wrote the following:

Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death in the place of all, and offered it to the Father. This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die.... This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection...

What then was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done, save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ?... The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image. Thus it happened that two opposite marvels took place at once: the death of all was consummated

in the Lord's body; yet because the Word was in it, death and corruption were in the same act utterly abolished. Death there had to be, and death for all, so that the due of all might be paid. Wherefore the Word...being Himself incapable of death, assumed a mortal body, that He might offer it as his own in the place of all, and suffering for the sake of all through His union with it, "might bring to nought him that had the power over death, that is, the devil, and

Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death in the place of all, and offered it to the Father. This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die....(Athanasius)

might deliver them who all their lifetime were enslaved by the fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14-15). By his death salvation has come to all men, and all creation has been redeemed.

Both Athanasius and Irenaeus emphasized the vicarious nature of the humanity Jesus assumed in his Incarnation. Only through the birth, life, sacrificial death and resurrection of the Incarnate Son of God could God save humanity.

This is the essence of the gospel understood by the early church and revealed in the Scriptures.

Gregory of Nazianzus (died A.D. 389) wrote of Jesus' assumption of our broken humanity through his Incarnation:

If anyone has put his trust in Him [Jesus] as a Man without a human mind, such a person is bereft of mind ... for that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves

may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole... (*Epistle* 101).

Contemporary Trinitarian theologians

In the 20th century, Trinitarian theology was advanced in the West largely through the work of Karl Barth and his students, including three brothers: Thomas F. Torrance, James B. Torrance and David Torrance, and their students.

In the 21st century, there are hundreds of Trinitarian theologians scattered among many denominations, including Ray Anderson, Elmer Colyer, Michael Jinkins, C. Baxter Kruger, Alan

Torrance, Trevor Hart and the late Colin Gunton.

Who are you, Lord?

Trinitarian theology faithfully answers the all-important question: "*Who is Jesus Christ?*" This biblically-anchored theology adds fullness of understanding to the gospel—and gives us a Christ-centered vocabulary to share the gospel with others in our contemporary world.

"Who are you, Lord?" is the principal theological question. This was Paul's anguished question on the Damascus Road, where he was struck down by the resurrected Jesus (Acts 9:5). Paul spent the rest of his life answering this question and then sharing the answer with all who would listen. The answer, revealed to us in Scripture, is the heart of the gospel and the focus of Trinitarian theology:

Jesus is fully God—the Second Person of the Trinity, the divine Son of God, in eternal union with the Father and the

Spirit. Scripture tells us that through the Son of God the entire universe was created, including all humans (Colossians 1:16), and he is the one who sustains the universe, including all humans (verse 17). So, when we say, “Jesus Christ” we are also saying “God” and “Creator.”

Jesus is fully human—the Son of God (the Word) became human (“flesh,” John 1:14), while continuing to remain fully divine. This is called the “Incarnation.” Scripture testifies that the Incarnation never ended, but continues—Jesus is now and forever fully God and fully human. He was resurrected and ascended bodily. He will return bodily, the same as he departed. When we say “Jesus Christ” we are also saying “humanity.”

As the One who is uniquely God (Creator and Sustainer of all) and also fully human, Jesus, in himself, is the unique union of God and humanity. In and through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus all humans are included in the life and love of God. As the apostle Paul emphasized, the man Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5) is the representative and substitute for all people—past, present, and future. He is the vicarious human who has come to live and die and be raised in our place and on our behalf to reconcile us to God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Romans 5, Paul addresses believers, but what he says applies to all humanity—believers and non-believers alike. According to Paul, through Jesus, *all* are...

- justified through faith, and therefore at peace with God (v. 1)
- reconciled to God through the death of Jesus (v. 10)
- saved through Jesus’ life (v. 10)

This justification, reconciliation and salvation occurred:

- when we were “still powerless” (v. 6)

- when we were “still sinners” (v. 8)
- when we were still “God’s enemies” (v. 10)

This occurred quite apart from our participation, let alone our good works. Jesus did these things for us and to us, and he did it within himself. As Irenaeus said, echoing Ephesians 1:10, it occurred in Jesus, via his Incarnation, through a great “recapitulation.”

The benefit of what Jesus did so long ago, extends to the present and on into the future, for Paul says, “how much more...shall we be saved through his life” (v. 10)—showing that salvation is

The benefit of what Jesus did so long ago, extends to the present and on into the future...

not a one-time *transaction*, but an enduring *relationship* that God has with all humanity—a relationship forged within the person of Jesus Christ—the one who, in himself, has brought God and humanity together in peace.

Jesus, the second Adam

Continuing in Romans 5, Paul compares the first Adam to Jesus, calling the latter the “second” or “final” Adam. Note Paul’s main points:

- “Just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam]...[and] all sinned...” (v. 12)
- “How much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ [the second Adam], overflow to the many?” (v. 15)
- And, “just as the result of one trespass [that of the first Adam] was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness [that of Jesus, the second or final Adam] was justification that brings life for *all men*” (v. 18).

“All” really means “all”

Paul is speaking of what Jesus did for all humanity. The scope of his vicarious human life extends to all who have ever lived. But not all Christians see “all” in this way:

Calvinism, for example, says salvation is not truly for all because the atonement is limited to the elect who are predestined to be saved; Jesus did not die for the non-elect. However, the Bible declares that Jesus died for *all*—and that his death applies to all *now*. Relevant passages include:

- John 12:32: “But I [Jesus], when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:14: “Christ’s love

compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.”

- Colossians 1:19-20: “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

- 1 Timothy 2:3-6: “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.”

- 1 Timothy 4:9-10: “This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance...that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.”

- Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who...suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

- 1 John 2:2: “[Jesus is] the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

(See also John 1:29; 3:17; Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Titus 2:11; and 1 John 4:14.)

While there is even more evidence, this scriptural evidence is sufficient to conclude that Jesus died for all humanity.

Salvation is *re-creation*, not mere transaction

Arminianism, in contrast to Calvinism, agrees that “all” refers to the entirety of humanity; however, salvation is only *potentially* theirs, not actually since salvation is not actually given until a person has faith.

But the Bible tells us that salvation does not come about through a mere *transaction* in which God gives us salvation in exchange for our repentance and faith.

Rather than a transaction, Scripture presents salvation as a free and unearned gift, a gift that involves *re-creation*. In Jesus, who is fully God and fully human, the perfect representative and substitute for humanity, all humans are a new creation. Although it is experienced only through faith, all humans are justified, reconciled and saved precisely because they are all included in Jesus—included in his Incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension.

Jesus did all this for us and to us by doing it with us and in us—as one of us. Jesus is the One for the many, the many in the One. Therefore, we understand from Scripture that...

- When Jesus died, all humanity died with him.
- When Jesus rose, all humanity rose to new life with him.
- When Jesus ascended, all humanity ascended and became seated with him at the Father’s side.

Let’s review the relevant passages:

2 Corinthians 5:14-16: “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced

that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

As we saw earlier in Romans 5:18, the result of Jesus’ righteousness is “justification that brings life *for all men*.” We are told to accept Christ’s sacrifice, but this does not cause the sacrifice to be effective; it was already effective.

Colossians 1:15-17: “He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether

Many theologies present a truncated view of the Incarnation—seeing it as a short-term accommodation by Jesus to pay the penalty for human sin. But Scripture presents the Incarnation as ongoing.

thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Because Jesus is both Creator and Sustainer of the entire cosmos (all humanity included), when he died, all creation (all humans included) “went down” with him—“therefore all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). And when he rose, we all rose; and when he ascended, we all ascended. Jesus includes everyone (“all”) in his Incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

Romans 6:10: “The death he [Jesus] died, he died to sin once for all.” Jesus’ death is already effective for everyone; he died to sin once for all.

Ephesians 2:4-5: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—

it is by grace you have been saved.”

1 Peter 1:18-20: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you...but with the precious blood of Christ.... He [Jesus] was chosen [to save humanity] before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

The gospel is about a relationship, a relationship with God healed and made real by God’s own action in Christ on our behalf. It is not about a set of demands, nor is it about a simple intellectual acceptance of a set of religious or Bible facts. Jesus Christ not only stood in for us at the judgment seat of God; he drew us into himself and made us, with him and in him, by the Spirit, God’s own beloved children.

The one in whom all the cosmos (including all humanity) lives and moves and has its being (Acts 17:28) became fully human while remaining fully divine (John 1:14).

Many theologies present a truncated view of the Incarnation—seeing it as a short-term accommodation by Jesus to pay the penalty for human sin. But Scripture presents the Incarnation as ongoing.

The miracle of the Incarnation is not something that happened “once upon a time,” now past. It is a change in how the entire cosmos is “wired”—it is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Incarnation changed everything, forever—reaching back to all human history, and reaching forward to encompass all time as it unfolds.

Paul speaks of this in Romans 7:4, where he says that even while we are

alive, we are already dead to the law by the body of Christ. Jesus' death in human flesh for us, though a historic event, is a present reality that applies to all humanity (past, present and future). It is this cosmic fact that underlies all history. This understanding is reinforced in Colossians 3:3: "You died," Paul says to the historically *alive* Colossians, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." Even before we literally die, therefore, we are already dead in Jesus' death and alive in Jesus' resurrection.

This is perhaps most clearly stated in Ephesians 2:5-6, where Paul asserts that since we are dead already in the mystery of Jesus' substitutionary death, all of us have also (right now), been "made alive together with him" and we are "raised up together with him" and "seated together with him in the heavenly realms." In other words, God in Christ not only intersects history at one moment of time, but also is the *eternal contemporary of every moment in time*, present there with all humanity included in him.

Perichoresis

The eternal communion of love that Father, Son and Spirit share as the Trinity involves a mystery of inter-relationship and interpenetration of the divine Persons, a mutual indwelling without loss of personal identity. As Jesus said, "...the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10:38). Early Greek-speaking Christian theologians described this relationship with the word *perichoresis*, which is derived from root words meaning *around* and *contain*.

Theologian Michael Jinkins comments on how this perichoretic life involves God's relationship with humanity:

The idea communicated by the word *perichoresis* is crucial but difficult to handle. We can best deal with it by focusing our attention on the incarnation. When the Word became flesh, God poured out his very life into creation while also and

simultaneously taking into his own triune being our humanity in the supreme act of self-abnegation for the sake of others. In this free act of self-surrender, God allows us to look into the very heart of his eternal being, into the Father's eternal outpouring into the Son, God's giving away of his own self without reservation. This act of self-giving is itself not merely some "it" but is God the Holy Spirit, flowing eternally from the Father to the Son and through the Son to humanity. As the Son in joyful surrender returns this love to the Father, the Spirit eternally returns to the Father, the Origin of all being (*Invitation to Theology*, p. 91).

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Everyone is in Christ

In and through Jesus Christ, God reaches out to include humans in his life and love. In and through Jesus, all humanity is now included in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity, although that fellowship can be experienced only through faith.

Jesus said to his followers the night before he died on the cross: "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20).

He does not say that one day they *will be* included—he says they *are* included and one day they will realize it. Salvation is about being "in" Jesus, not merely something being done "by" Jesus, which we later accept and thus make it "real" or "actual" for us. Salvation is about a relationship, and that is why Paul so frequently in his letters (over 130 times)

speaks of something being "in Christ" or similar phrases.

Salvation is ours only in union with Jesus, by which we share in Jesus' perfect human life and his relationship to the Father and the Spirit. United to Jesus, we are already included in God's triune life and love. But we cannot experience the joy of that life apart from faith.

As we have seen in Scripture, through union with Jesus, all humanity is...

- reconciled to the Father.
- liked, loved and wanted by the Father.
- accepted "in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6, KJV).
- forgiven (no record of sin and no condemnation).

The gospel declares not the *possibility* or the *potential* of these things being true for us, but a reality that we are urged to accept.

The faith of Christ

In the King James Version, Galatians 2:20 reads: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

This and other translations speak appropriately of our sharing in the faith of Christ (rather than "faith *in* Christ"). It is Christ's faith that saves us. David Torrance writes (emphasis added):

We are saved by Christ's faith and obedience to the Father, not ours. My brother Tom [Torrance] often quoted Gal. 2:20.... Such is the wording of the KJV, which I believe is a correct translation.... Other translators, like those of the New International Version, apparently because they found it so difficult to

believe we can live by Christ's faith rather than our faith, have altered the text to make it read, "I live by faith *in* the Son of God"! – something altogether different! That translation takes away from the vicarious nature of Christ's life of faith. It is by his faith [not ours] that we are saved and live! Our faith is a thankful response to his faith. When we look back along our lives and ponder how disobedient we at times have been and continue to be, it is marvelously comforting to know that Christ gives us his life of obedience to the Father and that it is Christ's obedience which counts. We are saved by his obedience, not ours. (*An Introduction to Torrance Theology*, pp. 7-8)

Thomas Torrance writes:

Jesus steps into the actual situation where we are summoned to have faith in God, to believe and trust in him, and he acts in our place and in our stead from within the depths of our unfaithfulness and provides us freely with a faithfulness in which we may share.... That is to say, if we think of belief, trust or faith as forms of human activity before God, then we must think of Jesus Christ as believing, trusting, or having faith in God the Father on our behalf and in our place....

Through his incarnational and atoning union with us our faith is implicated in his faith, and through that implication, far from being depersonalized or dehumanized, it is made to issue freely and spontaneously out of our own human life before God. Regarded merely in itself, however as Calvin used to say, faith is an empty vessel, for in faith it is upon the faithfulness of Christ that we rest and even the way in which we rest on his is sustained and undergirded by his unflinching faithfulness (*The Mediation of Christ*, pp. 82-83)

But what about human freedom?

If it is the life, faith and obedience of Jesus Christ that saves us and includes us in that salvation, what is our role?

What happens in this viewpoint to the idea of human freedom? Consider the following points:

All humanity, by God's sovereign decision and action, is included in Christ; this inclusion was predestined and has been accomplished in Jesus, apart from any action, belief, works, etc. of our own. Each person is now urged, through the prompting of the Spirit, to believe God's word and personally accept his love. God forces this personal decision/acceptance upon no one. Love must be freely given and freely received; it cannot be coerced, or it is not love.

Thus human decision, the exercise of human freedom, is of great importance, but only in this context of accepting God's gift that has already been freely given.

We do not "decide for Christ" in the sense that our personal decision creates or causes our salvation.

Rather, through personal decision, we accept what is ours already in Christ, placing our trust in the one who has already trusted for us in our place and as our representative.

Not universalism

When we talk about human decision, we are talking about personal response. And we must take care not to confuse what is objectively true in Jesus for all humanity with an individual's personal and subjective reception of or encounter with this objective truth.

We do not "decide for Christ" in the sense that our personal decision creates or causes our salvation.

Rather, through personal decision, we accept what is ours *already* in Christ, placing our trust in the one who has already trusted for us in our place and as our representative.

The Holy Spirit leads us to trust not in our faith, but in Jesus.

This objective union, which we have with Christ through his incarnational assumption of our humanity into himself, is personally and subjectively lived out in faith through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

When we personally believe the gospel, which is to accept what is already ours by grace, we begin to *enjoy* God's love for us and live out the new creation that God, prior to our ever believing, made us to be in Christ.

There is the *general*, or objective, truth about all humanity in Jesus, and also the *personal*, or subjective, experience of this truth.

Objectively *all people*, past, present and future, are justified already; all are sanctified; all are reconciled *in Jesus* in and through what he has done as their representative and substitute. In Jesus, objectively, the old self has *already* passed away; in him, objectively, we are *already* the new humanity, represented as such by him before and with God.

However, although all people are already *objectively* redeemed by Jesus Christ, not all have yet personally and *subjectively* awakened to and accepted what God has done for them. They do not yet know who they truly are in union with Jesus.

What is objectively true for everyone must be subjectively and personally

received and experienced through repentance and faith. Repentance and faith do not *create* or *cause* a person's salvation, but salvation cannot be experienced and enjoyed without them. Repentance and faith are themselves gifts of God.

In the Scriptures, we find some verses that speak to the general/objective, while others speak to the personal/subjective. Both are real and true—but the *personal* is true only because the *general* is a pre-existing reality.

These two categories are found throughout Scripture—both sometimes occurring in one passage, as happens in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Paul starts in verses 18-19 with the objective/universal: “All this is from God, who reconciled [past tense] us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”

Good news for all people

Here is a *general* truth that applies objectively to all—all are already reconciled to God through what Jesus has done in union with all humanity.

Any theology that is faithful to Scripture and to Jesus himself must account for this truth. Unfortunately, many theologians tend to ignore this aspect and focus primarily or only on the personal/subjective. That does the gospel a disservice, because it is the general/objective aspect of who Jesus is and what he has done that is the foundation upon which the personal/subjective rests.

Back to 2 Corinthians 5, having established the general in verses 18-21, Paul goes on in verses 20-21 to address the subjective/ personal: “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.”

How can *all* be “reconciled” already and yet the invitation go out to “be reconciled”—suggesting a reconciliation yet to occur? The answer is that *both* are true—these are two aspects of one truth. *All* are *already* reconciled in Christ—this is the universal and objective truth—but not all yet embrace and therefore experience their reconciliation with God.

Here is a general truth that applies objectively to all—all are already reconciled to God through what Jesus has done in union with all humanity.

To be reconciled, and yet not know and experience it, is to continue to live as though one is not reconciled. Having one's eyes opened by the Spirit to this reconciliation, choosing to embrace it, and then experiencing it does not cause the reconciliation to occur, but it does make it *personally realized*. Thus, the evangelistic invitation from Christ's ambassadors (verse 20) is to “be reconciled.” But this appeal is not to do something that would bring about reconciliation; rather it is an appeal to *receive* the reconciliation that exists already with God in Christ. **NL**

Continued In The Next Northern Light

Introduction à la théologie trinitaire basée sur Christ

La mission de Communion Internationale dans la Grâce (CIG) consiste à participer avec Jésus-Christ à la vie et au partage de l'Évangile. Notre compréhension de Jésus et de son évangile de grâce a radicalement changé dans le cadre d'une réforme doctrinale qui s'est déroulée au cours de la dernière décennie du 20^e siècle. Par voie de conséquence, nous avons harmonisé notre énoncé de croyances, qui s'est aligné sur les principales doctrines bibliques de la foi chrétienne historique orthodoxe.

Aujourd'hui, au cours de la première décennie du 21^e siècle, la transformation de CIG se poursuit en se concentrant maintenant sur une réforme théologique. Cette réforme se dresse à partir du fondement sur lequel repose la transformation de nos doctrines, à savoir la réponse à la question essentielle : Qui est Jésus-Christ?

« Qui » est le mot-clé de cette question. En effet, en essence, la théologie n'est pas une question de concepts ou d'un système de croyances, mais elle expose une personne vivante, Jésus-Christ. « Qui est cette personne? » Elle est pleinement Dieu, un avec le Père et l'Esprit, c'est la deuxième personne de la Trinité. Et elle est pleinement homme, un avec l'humanité par son incarnation. Jésus-Christ est l'unique union entre Dieu et l'homme. Il n'est pas seulement l'objet de nos recherches académiques, il est notre vie. Notre foi repose sur lui, et non pas sur des idées ou des doctrines à son sujet. Notre réflexion théologique est un acte profond d'émerveillement et d'adoration. En fait, la théologie pourrait se définir comme la foi qui cherche à comprendre.

Au cours des dernières années, notre compréhension du fondement de notre réforme doctrinale s'est grandement approfondie par l'étude, dans une attitude de prière, de ce qui est communément appelé la **théologie trinitaire cen-**

trée sur Christ. La première partie du présent document résume ce que nous avons compris de cette théologie, et la seconde partie répond aux questions et aux objections qui ont été soulevées à propos de cette théologie. Notre but est de tenir les pasteurs et les membres de CIG informés de ce processus théologique permanent de réforme doctrinale, et de les inviter à y participer avec nous activement. Tous ensemble, nous nous retrouvons dans un cheminement qui consiste à croître de plus en plus en Jésus, et nous prions pour qu'il nous guide dans chaque étape de ce parcours.

Lorsque nous abordons ce sujet, nous reconnaissons l'imperfection de notre compréhension et de notre capacité à transmettre cette vérité. En fait, la seule façon de répondre de manière appropriée à la merveilleuse vérité théologique que nous découvrons en Jésus-Christ serait de placer nos mains sur notre bouche et de nous recueillir en silence. Mais nous sentons aussi que l'Esprit nous appelle à proclamer cette vérité, à la crier sur les toits, avec le plus de clarté possible, non pas avec arrogance ou condescendance, mais dans un esprit d'amour.

Notre souhait est que ce document soit informatif et clair, et qu'il soit une source d'inspiration pour vous, en vous faisant véritablement réfléchir sur l'alliance d'amour de Dieu conclue avec nous tous. Notre théologie traite de Jésus-Christ, de l'amour et de la vie qu'il partage avec nous.

PREMIERE PARTIE : ORIGINE ET VUE D'ENSEMBLE

Pourquoi la théologie?

Pour répondre simplement, la théologie est « la connaissance de Dieu » : notre compréhension de sa personnalité et de tout ce qui a un rapport avec lui. Dans un sens, nous possédons tous « une théologie personnelle », c'est-à-dire

De Ted Johnston, de l'équipe du développement des ministères, avec la participation de Dr J. Michael Fezell, de Dr Michael Morrison, de Terry Akers et de Keith Brittain

notre propre compréhension de Dieu. Même les athées ont une théologie, celle qui se résume par : « il n'y a pas de Dieu ». Et il est évident que toutes les Églises ont une théologie, il s'agit du cadre dans lequel elles formulent leurs doctrines.

Avec les changements au sein de la CIG, il était devenu évident que nous devions revoir aussi notre cadre théologique. Quel est le rapport entre la doctrine et la théologie? Prenez l'exemple de la doctrine du salut par la grâce. Cette doctrine nous enseigne que Christ nous sauve par la grâce que nous recevons par la foi. La théologie cherche à comprendre et à expliquer non seulement le « comment » ou le « pourquoi » qui se cachent derrière le salut, mais aussi ce qui est encore plus important, le « qui ». La théologie pose la question de « qui est ce Jésus-Christ qui sauve » et « qui sommes-nous, nous qui sommes sauvés par lui? ».

Notre théologie nous enseigne que le salut est une question de relation personnelle, et pas seulement de grande déclaration ou de transaction. Dieu est un Dieu d'alliance, pas un Dieu contractuel. Nous apprenons cela dans les Saintes Écritures qui nous parlent de l'alliance relationnelle vitale qui est la base du salut. Cette relation inclut la communion trinitaire divine (la relation éternelle qui existe entre le Père, le Fils et le Saint-Esprit) et toute l'humanité façonnée en Christ et par Christ.

Ainsi, la doctrine du salut et la théologie sur laquelle elle repose sont une question de relation, de vie véritable en Christ et par Christ, celui qui est à la source de toute la création et qui la soutient. La vie de, par et en Christ, est le centre d'intérêt de notre recherche théologique et de la présente introduction à la théologie trinitaire christocentrique. Sa vie est à la base de la vision théologique que Communion Internationale dans la Grâce adopte désormais comme confession.

Quelles sont les théologies alternatives?

Il existe au sein de la communauté chrétienne plusieurs théologies différentes. Des déclinaisons du calvinisme et de l'arminianisme ont prévalu principalement dans le protestantisme.

Le calvinisme est une théologie issue des enseignements du réformateur protestant Jean Calvin (1509-1564). Il existe des formes multiples du calvinisme, mais la plupart se regroupent dans les deux préceptes suivants :

- expiation limitée – l'idée que Jésus est seulement mort pour les élus (ceux qui sont prédéterminés à être sauvés) ;

- la grâce irrésistible – l'idée selon laquelle les élus seront sauvés et que cette élection ne peut être rejetée par ceux qui sont élus pour le salut.

Le calvinisme se concentre sur la souveraineté de Dieu dans l'élection et le salut. Beaucoup d'églises protestantes du 21^e siècle soutiennent cette théologie, y compris la plupart des presbytériens, des réformés, des baptistes particuliers (réformés), et bien d'autres.

L'arminianisme est une théologie qui provient des enseignements d'un protestant réformé, Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). Il a rejeté les idées de Calvin sur l'expiation limitée et la grâce irrésistible, en professant que Jésus est mort pour toute l'humanité, que tous peuvent être sauvés s'ils prennent les mesures nécessaires et que le Saint-Esprit les rend capables de prendre. Cette théologie, quoique qu'elle souligne la souveraineté de Dieu dans le salut, elle s'appuie cependant sur la décision/liberté humaine. Cette théologie est adoptée par beaucoup d'églises protestantes, notamment par les méthodistes, de nombreux baptistes et beaucoup d'autres dénominations.

Théologie trinitaire christocentrique

Bien que CIG rejoigne plusieurs aspects du calvinisme et de l'arminianisme, elle considère cependant que la théologie trinitaire centrée sur Christ demeure la plus fidèle à Jésus-Christ et à la Bible. D'autres noms peuvent être donnés à cette théologie, comme les suivants : théologie trinitaire, théologie christocentrique, théologie d'adoption, théologie de l'inclusion ou théologie de l'incarnation.

La théologie est trinitaire parce qu'elle a comme point de départ la compréhension que le Dieu unique existe éternellement est l'union inséparable de trois personnes distinctes : le Père, le Fils et l'Esprit. La théologie, qui consiste à connaître Dieu et la trinité, est la révélation par Jésus-Christ de qui est Dieu par sa nature divine. Ainsi, la doctrine de la trinité est au cœur de cette théologie.

La théologie est axée sur Christ parce qu'elle se concentre sur la place centrale qu'Il occupe, sur sa prééminence et la façon dont il se révèle lui-même : un (uni) avec le Père et l'Esprit ; et un (uni) avec toute l'humanité.

Les doctrines jumelées, de la trinité et de l'incarnation de Jésus (dont sa fonction de vicaire de l'humanité, c'est-à-dire son représentant et son substitut) sont des vérités fondamentales et bibliques qui concernent Dieu et Jésus. Elles constituent « les vérités de toute vérité », la « logique », si vous voulez, avec laquelle cette théologie cherche à comprendre toutes choses, y compris la doctrine, notre mission, l'adoration, etc.

Voyez cette théologie comme une paire de lunettes avec laquelle nous essayons de lire et de comprendre la foi chrétienne. Plutôt que d'avoir notre expérience religieuse humaine comme point de départ, nous voulons commencer par ce que les vérités bibliques nous révèlent sur Dieu et sur le fait que nous sommes vraiment unis avec Dieu par Jésus-Christ.

De cette façon, nous cherchons à penser en termes « christologiques ». Comme l'indique Thomas F. Torrance (l'un des théologiens trinitaires majeurs du 20^e siècle), Jésus est en même temps la base (le fondement/l'origine) et la grammaire (le principe organisateur/logique) de la divinité et de l'ensemble de l'ordre créé, incluant toute l'humanité.

En tant que confession, Communion Internationale dans la Grâce endosse la théologie trinitaire centrée sur Christ parce qu'elle la considère comme pleinement fidèle à Jésus, *Parole vivante* de Dieu.

Est-elle biblique?

« Mais », quelqu'un pourrait se demander : « cette théologie trinitaire, centrée sur Christ est-elle fidèle aux Écritures, à la Bible? » Nous sommes convaincus que la réponse est « oui ». Nous croyons que cette théologie est celle qui est la plus fidèle aux Saintes Écritures, lorsqu'elles sont comprises correctement. Il va de soi que les termes « correctement comprises » sont importants dans cette phrase. Vous vous rappellerez la rencontre de Jésus avec des étudiants des Écritures hébraïques (l'Ancien Testament) de son époque. Ils étudiaient méticuleusement les Écritures sans toutefois en retirer le sens que Dieu leur avait donné. Dans Jean 5 : 39-40, il est écrit : « *Vous sondez les Écritures, parce que vous pensez avoir en elles la vie éternelle : ce sont elles qui rendent témoignage de moi. Et vous ne voulez pas venir à moi pour avoir la vie!* ».

Ce dont parlent véritablement les Écritures (Ancien et Nouveau Testaments), c'est de Jésus et du salut rendu possible par lui et en lui. C'est avec la logique de Christ, la pensée de Christ, que nous devons lire les Écritures et ainsi les comprendre justement dans leur globalité. Jésus-Christ, et lui seul, devrait constituer la logique de notre théologie, car il représente l'objet et la finalité de la révélation de Dieu.

Quels sont les d'autres enseignants de cette théologie?

Certains vont se demander si Communion Internationale dans la Grâce en est arrivée d'elle-même à cette théologie ou si elle s'est fiée à d'autres sources (peut-être pas tellement fiables) en reproduisant la totalité de leur matériel.

Tout comme le calvinisme et l'arminianisme, la théologie trinitaire centrée sur Christ existe depuis longtemps. En fait, cette théologie a sous-tendu la plupart des enseignements de l'église primitive; elle a aussi servi à la rédaction du credo chrétien et à l'établissement du canon des Écritures du Nouveau Testament. Ci-dessous figurent les noms des premiers et des plus éminents théologiens trinitariens :

Irénée († 202 apr. J.-C.)

Irénée était un disciple de Polycarpe, qui a étudié avec l'apôtre Jean. Irénée a cherché à montrer que l'évangile du salut que les apôtres ont enseigné et qu'ils ont transmis était centré sur Jésus, y compris sur la vérité de son incarnation. Il vit que la Bible évoque l'incarnation comme un acte de récapitulation par lequel Jésus devint pour toute l'humanité une nouvelle « tête » et ainsi un nouveau point de départ (cf. Éphésiens 1:9,10, 20-23). Par l'incarnation, la chute a été inversée – l'ensemble de la race humaine est « née de nouveau » en Jésus. Maintenant, l'humanité a trouvé en Jésus une nouvelle source, une nouvelle origine et une nouvelle identité.

Le fondement biblique de la pensée d'Irénée comporte les déclarations de Paul, dans Romains 5, où il déclare que Jésus est le « second » (et définitif) Adam de l'humanité. « En Jésus », écrit Irénée, « Dieu a récapitulé en lui la formation vétuste de l'homme (Adam) afin de pouvoir tuer le péché, désarmer la mort et donner vie à l'homme [...] »

Irénée avait compris que Jésus avait pris sur lui toute l'humanité et qu'il avait renversé la chute en créant une nouvelle race humaine par sa vie, sa mort, sa résurrection et son ascension vicariale (de représentant et de substitut). Plus loin, nous parlerons davantage de l'importance du rôle de vicaire de l'humanité de Jésus.

La beauté et la contribution de l'enseignement d'Irénée se trouvent dans sa compréhension que le renouvellement (ou la recréation) de l'humanité (par l'incarnation) n'est pas juste une œuvre accomplie par Jésus-Christ, mais surtout qu'il s'agit d'une nouvelle création « en » Jésus et donc « par » lui. Et ceci concerne bien plus que le pardon des péchés, ce qu'Irénée appelle la « divinisation » de l'humanité.

Remarquez comment l'historien de l'Église Justo Gonzalez résume la réflexion d'Irénée dans son ouvrage *L'histoire du christianisme* (volume 1, pages 68 à 71) :

« Irénée voyait Dieu comme un être aimant, qui a créé le monde et l'humanité du désir d'avoir une création à aimer et à mener, comme un berger qui aime et qui guide un troupeau. Selon sa perspective, toute l'Histoire apparaît comme le processus par lequel le Berger divin guide la création vers son but final.

Le joyau de sa création est l'être humain, créé depuis le commencement en tant que personne libre et par conséquent responsable. Cette liberté est telle qu'elle nous permet de devenir progressivement conformes à la volonté de Dieu et à sa nature; et ainsi d'apprécier une communion sans cesse croissante avec notre Créateur. La finalité de ce processus est ce qu'Irénée appelle la « divinisation » : le dessein de Dieu de nous rendre toujours plus semblable au divin.

Cela ne signifie pas pour autant que nous serons amalgamés au divin au point de nous y perdre, ou que nous arriverons un jour à être identiques à Dieu. Bien au contraire, Dieu est tellement au-

dessus de nous, que peu importe jusqu'à quel point nous grandirons dans cette ressemblance, il nous devancera toujours.

Au moment approprié, une fois que l'humanité eut reçu la préparation qui convenait par le travail que Dieu fit au travers d'Israël, la Parole s'incarna en Jésus-Christ. Jésus est le « second Adam », car à cause de sa vie, de sa mort et de sa résurrection, une nouvelle humanité a été créée, et parce que dans toutes les actions qu'il a accomplies il a corrigé ce qui a été déformé par le péché.

Même à la fin, lorsque le royaume de Dieu sera établi, l'humanité rachetée continuera de croître dans une communion sans cesse grandissante avec Dieu.

Ce que nous constatons chez Irénée est une grande vision de l'histoire dans laquelle le dessein de Dieu se déroule. Le point focal de cette histoire est l'incarnation, et cela, non pas seulement parce que par elle Dieu redresse l'histoire déformée de l'humanité, mais parce que dès le commencement, l'union de l'humanité avec Dieu était le but. Le dessein de Dieu est de s'unir avec la création humaine, et cela s'est produit en Jésus-Christ ».

Par sa compréhension de l'Évangile et des Écritures qui révèlent Jésus-Christ dans sa plénitude, Irénée a servi Dieu en dressant une vision théologique centrée sur Christ des plus surprenantes.

Athanase († 373 apr. J.-C.)

Jeune, Athanase a défendu le véritable Évangile de la grâce de Dieu devant de faux enseignants (y compris Arius) qui réfutaient la divinité de Jésus. Cette défense a conduit à la formulation de la doctrine de la Trinité, officialisée lors du Concile de Nicée en 325 apr. J.-C. Athanase a également joué un rôle fondamental dans l'établissement de la version définitive du canon du Nouveau Testament.

Ce fut donc une théologie trinitaire axée sur Jésus-Christ, telle que défendue par Athanase et d'autres, qui servit de base à la formulation de la doctrine chrétienne fondamentale, et qui contribua à compléter le canon des Écritures du Nouveau Testament.

Dans son traité intitulé **Sur l'Incarnation**, Athanase écrit ce qui suit :

« Ainsi, en revêtant un corps semblable au nôtre, parce que nos corps sont sujets à la corruption de la mort, il a soumis son corps à la mort à la place de tous, et l'a offert au Père. Et cela, il l'a accompli par pur amour pour nous, afin que par sa mort, tous meurent... Cela afin qu'il puisse rendre incorruptibles les hommes qui se sont tournés vers la corruption, et pour les rendre vivants par sa mort en s'appropriant son corps et par la grâce de sa résurrection.

Qu'est-ce que Dieu était-il censé faire? Que pouvait-il faire d'autre, en tant que Dieu, que de renouveler son image dans l'humanité afin que par elle, l'homme puisse à nouveau le connaître? Et comment cela pouvait-il s'accomplir, à moins d'envoyer sa propre Image, notre Sauveur Jésus-Christ? La parole de Dieu vint dans sa propre personne, car lui seul, l'image du Père, pouvait recréer l'homme fait selon son image. Ainsi, deux choses opposées et merveilleuses se sont produites en même temps : la mort de tous a été consumée dans le corps du Seigneur; et comme la Parole s'y trouvait, la mort et la corruption, par le même acte, furent totalement abolies. La mort devait avoir lieu, et la mort pour tous, afin que la dette de tous puisse être payée. Ainsi donc, la Parole, étant incapable de mourir, a assumé un corps mortel qu'elle a pu offrir comme le sien, à la place de tous, en souffrant pour tous, par son union avec l'humanité afin qu'« il rende impuissant celui qui avait la puissance sur la mort, c'est-à-dire le diable; ainsi, il délivre tous ceux qui, par crainte de la mort, étaient toute leur vie retenus dans la servitude» (Hébreux

2:14-15). Par la mort de Jésus-Christ, le salut est parvenu à tous les hommes et toute la création a été rachetée ».

Remarquez la continuité entre les pensées d'Athanase et celles d'Irénée. Tous deux ont mis l'accent sur le rôle de vicaire de l'humanité de Jésus-Christ incarné. Par l'incarnation, Dieu accomplit le salut de l'humanité en Jésus. Tel est l'Évangile compris par l'Église ancienne, comme les Écritures le révèlent.

Grégoire de Nazianze († 389 apr. J.-C.)

Grégoire (un de ceux qui ont été appelés Pères de Cappadoce) a écrit sur le fait que par l'incarnation de Jésus a endossé notre humanité. Il en parle comme d'un échange, afin que le salut et la guérison soient accomplis pour toute l'humanité :

« Si quelqu'un a placé sa confiance en lui [Jésus] en tant qu'homme, mais démuné d'un esprit d'homme, celui-ci est dépourvu d'esprit [...] car ce qu'il n'a pas assumé, il ne l'a pas guéri non plus; mais ce qui est uni à sa divinité, cela même est aussi sauvé. Si seulement la moitié d'Adam périt, alors ce que Jésus a endossé et a sauvé n'est qu'une demi-portion aussi; mais si c'est toute la nature d'Adam qui a chuté, alors elle doit être unifiée à la nature entière de celui qui a été engendré, et donc sauvé comme un tout. [...].

La Parole a vu que la corruption ne pouvait être vaincue que par la mort; or, Jésus-Christ, en tant que la Parole, ne pouvait pas mourir, étant immortel et Fils du Père. C'est pour cette raison qu'il a endossé un corps sujet à la mort, afin que ce corps, appartenant à la Parole qui est au-dessus de tout, puisse en mourant devenir un échange suffisant pour tous, en demeurant pour autant incorruptible, et que sa présence même puisse mettre fin à la corruption de tous par la grâce de la résurrection ».

La perte de la vision trinitaire

Bien que la vision trinitaire fût prédominante au sein de l'église primitive, d'autres visions grandirent en importance au fil des années. En particulier, au sein de la théologie latine du 5^e siècle, une opposition se forma contre l'idée selon laquelle ce fut bien notre humanité pécheresse, déchue et séparée de Dieu, que le Fils de Dieu assuma par son incarnation. Ces détracteurs défendaient l'idée qu'il s'agissait plutôt de notre humanité dans son état de pureté (avant la chute de l'homme) que le Fils endossa, en recevant cette nature sans tache de sa mère Marie, d'où son immaculée conception. Par un détour ironique de l'histoire, la théologie protestante dominante, bien qu'elle rejette la doctrine de l'Immaculée Conception, a néanmoins retenu l'idée que Jésus a assumé la nature sans péché de l'humanité (son état avant la chute).

Toutefois, les réformateurs protestants mirent bien l'accent sur l'incarnation, en la considérant comme « le grand échange ». Ce fut le cas de Jean Calvin qui mourut en 1564. Il écrivit ce qui suit dans son ouvrage *Institution de la religion chrétienne* :

« Quelqu'un peut désormais se demander comment Christ a-t-il aboli le péché et la séparation qui existait entre nous et Dieu, et comment a-t-il acquis la justice qui nous rend favorables aux yeux de Dieu? À cela, nous répondons de façon générale, qu'il a accompli cela par son obéissance... En bref, dès le moment où il prit la forme d'un serviteur, il commença à payer le prix de la libération afin de nous racheter...

Voici donc ce merveilleux échange qu'il a fait pour nous, à cause de sa bonne volonté illimitée; en devenant Fils de l'homme avec nous, il nous a fait devenir fils de Dieu avec lui; par sa venue sur terre, il a préparé notre ascension dans les cieux; en revêtant notre mortalité, il nous a attribué son immortalité... en prenant sur lui tout le poids de notre ini-

quité (qui nous oppressait), il nous a revêtus de sa justice ».

Théologiens trinitaires contemporains

Au cours du 20^e siècle, la théologie trinitaire a été promue en Occident par l'œuvre de Karl Barth et de ses élèves, tels que Thomas F. Torrance et son frère James B. Torrance. Et maintenant, au 21^e siècle, il existe des centaines de théologiens trinitaires christocentriques répartis dans beaucoup d'églises. Par exemple, Michaël Jenkins, Ray Anderson, Elmer Colyer, Robert F. Capon, Gary Deddo, Gerrit Scott Dawson. Au sein de Communion Internationale dans la Grâce, John McKenna et J. Michael Feazell sont les deux principaux partisans. Nous citerons certains de ces théologiens dans le présent document.

Quand Communion Internationale dans la Grâce a-t-elle adopté cette théologie?

Au sein de Communion Internationale dans la Grâce, nous en sommes venus à comprendre que la théologie trinitaire axée sur Christ était la réponse la plus fidèle à la plus importante des questions : « Qui est Jésus-Christ? ». Cette théologie fondée sur la Bible apporte une pleine compréhension de l'Évangile et nous donne un vocabulaire centré sur Christ qui nous permet de partager l'Évangile dans le monde.

Comme la poussière des changements doctrinaux des années 90 retombait, les responsables de Communion Internationale dans la Grâce ont dû faire face à certaines incohérences de notre théologie. Nous avons adopté jusque-là une perspective théologique essentiellement armianiste, mais nous étions arrivés à la conclusion que cette vision théologique ne correspondait pas avec le salut par Christ seul, seulement par la grâce et entièrement relationnelle que les Écritures nous révèlent.

Nous avons donc commencé par étudier

plus profondément la théologie, en recherchant l'aide de Dieu pour qu'il nous guide et en examinant avec beaucoup de soin les avenues qui se présentaient à nous. Il en a résulté notre nouvelle position doctrinale qui se reflétait de plus en plus à travers les documents officiels que nous diffusons depuis quelques années.

Nous sommes contents d'être en mesure de vous présenter maintenant les grandes lignes des principes et des tenants qui constituent notre vision actuelle. Notre but n'est pas de demander à nos membres (ni même à nos pasteurs ou à nos enseignants) de devenir des théologiens académiques. Cependant, nous invitons tout le monde à célébrer avec nous cette vérité sur Dieu et sur toute l'humanité qui a été prise en charge par la personne de Jésus-Christ, si merveilleusement bien exprimée dans cette théologie.

De plus, nous voulons aussi fournir à ceux qui souhaiteraient approfondir cette théologie les moyens pour le faire (dont une bibliographie).

Pour ceux qui toutefois préféreraient une autre vision théologique, nous voulons leur témoigner du respect et de la tolérance. Nous ne sommes pas sauvés par la qualité de notre théologie, mais par Dieu seulement, en Christ et par lui seulement, tout cela par la grâce, et elle seule (donc, sans le concours des efforts humains ou de leur connaissance). Nous tenons cependant à partager la joie que cette compréhension nous a apportée et nous voulons inviter tous les pasteurs et les enseignants au sein de Communion Internationale dans la Grâce à étudier le présent document avec soin, et avec l'aide de Dieu, à adopter et à refléter ce qu'ils en comprennent dans leur prédication et leur enseignement.

Qui es-tu Seigneur?

« Qui es-tu Seigneur? » : voilà la principale question théologique qu'il convient de se poser. Remarquez qu'il ne s'agit pas de « qu'est-ce que » ou de « comment », mais bien de « qui ».

« Qui es-tu Seigneur? » a aussi été la question angoissante que Paul s'est posée sur le chemin de Damas lorsqu'il fut frappé par Jésus ressuscité (Actes 9 : 5). Paul a passé le reste de sa vie à répondre à cette question importante, et ensuite à en partager la réponse à qui voulait bien l'entendre. Effectivement, la réponse, révélée dans les Écritures, constitue le cœur de l'Évangile et le point de mire de la théologie trinitaire centrée sur Christ.

Jésus est pleinement Dieu : la deuxième personne de la trinité, le Fils de Dieu, dans une union éternelle avec le Père et le Saint-Esprit. C'est la doctrine de la Trinité. De plus, les Écritures nous apprennent que ce fut le Fils de Dieu (Jésus-Christ dans son état préincarné) qui créa tout l'univers, y compris les êtres humains (Colossiens 1:16), et qu'il soutient maintenant l'univers, dont l'humanité (Colossiens 1:17). Lorsque l'on parle de « Jésus-Christ », entendez « Dieu » et « Créateur ».

Jésus est pleinement homme : Le Fils de Dieu (la Parole) est devenu humain (« chair », Jean 1:14), tout en étant pleinement divin. C'est la doctrine de l'incarnation. Les Écritures affirment que l'incarnation continue; Jésus est encore entièrement Dieu et entièrement humain. Lorsque l'on parle de Jésus-Christ, on parle de l'humanité.

Jésus est médiateur et vicaire de l'humanité : en tant que Dieu (créateur et soutien de toutes choses) et aussi pleinement humain, Jésus, en lui-même, est l'union unique entre Dieu et l'humanité. En Jésus et par lui, toute l'humanité est incluse dans la vie et l'amour de Dieu. L'homme Jésus (I Timothée 2:5) est le représentant et le substitut de tous les

hommes, qui ont vécu, qui vivent et qui vivront. Il est le vicaire. Lorsque l'on parle de « Jésus-Christ », on entend « Dieu en union avec toute l'humanité ».

Dans Romains 5, Paul évoque plus longuement l'aspect fantastique de la personne de Jésus. Il s'adresse à ceux qui croient, mais il laisse entendre clairement que tout ce qu'il écrit concerne l'humanité entière, croyants comme non-croyants. Selon Paul, par Jésus, tous sont :

- justifiés par la foi, qui procure la paix avec Dieu (verset 1) ;
- réconciliés avec Dieu par la mort de Jésus (verset 10) ;
- sauvés par la vie de Jésus (verset 10).

Quand cette justification, cette réconciliation et ce salut se sont-ils produits ? :

- quand nous étions « encore sans force » (verset 6) ;
- quand nous étions « encore pécheurs » (verset 8) ;
- quand nous étions « encore ennemis de Dieu » (verset 10).

Il est évident que ces choses se sont produites sans notre concours et encore moins de nos bonnes œuvres. Jésus a accompli ces choses pour nous et à nous (à notre place), et il l'a fait en lui. Comme le mentionnait Irénée, cela s'est passé en Jésus, par son incarnation, par sa grande « recapitulation ».

Le bénéfice de ce que Jésus a accompli il y a si longtemps s'étend jusqu'au présent, et à l'avenir, car Paul écrit « à plus forte raison... serons-nous sauvés par sa vie » (verset 10b), montrant ainsi que le salut n'est pas une transaction unique, mais une relation permanente que Dieu entretient avec toute l'humanité, une relation forgée dans la personne même de Jésus-Christ, celui qui en lui-même relie Dieu et l'humanité dans la paix.

Jésus, le second Adam

Paul poursuit au sujet de cette vérité merveilleuse en comparant le premier Adam à Jésus, qui est le second (et définitif) Adam : — « Comme par un seul homme le péché est entré dans le monde [Adam] ... tous ont péché... » (verset 12) ;

- « À plus forte raison la grâce de Dieu et le don de la grâce venant d'un seul homme, Jésus-Christ [le second Adam], ont-ils été abondamment répandus sur beaucoup (« tous » au verset 12) ? » (verset 15) ;

- « Ainsi donc comme par une seule offense [celle d'Adam] la condamnation a atteint tous les hommes [remarquez bien que l'on parle de tout le monde] de même par un seul acte de justice [le second et dernier Adam] la justification qui donne la vie s'étend à tous les hommes » (verset 18).

« Tous » veut bien dire « tous »

Nous croyons que ce que Paul évoque de Jésus-Christ concerne toute l'humanité. Ce que Jésus a accompli par sa vie en tant que vicaire de l'humanité unie à Dieu par son Incarnation est universel : c'est pour toute l'humanité, tous ceux qui ont vécu, qui vivent maintenant, et qui naîtront à la vie. Mais toutes les théologies chrétiennes ne comprennent pas le « tous » de cette manière :

• **Le Calvinisme** : dit que le salut n'est pas vraiment pour tous, qu'il se limite aux élus, c'est-à-dire à ceux qui sont prédestinés à être sauvés. Jésus n'est pas mort pour les non-élus.

• **L'Arminianisme** : dit que « tous » fait référence à toute l'humanité; cependant, le salut est potentiellement le leur, mais ne l'est pas dans les faits. C'est un point fondamental sur lequel nous reviendrons plus tard.

Mais, selon nous, l'Écriture est très claire. Elle nous apprend que Jésus est

mort pour tous, et que sa mort est pour tous, et ce dès maintenant. Remarquez les quelques passages suivants :

- Jean 12:32 : « Et moi, quand j'aurai été élevé de la terre, j'attirerai [je, Jésus] tous les hommes à moi ».

- 1 Jean 2:2 : « [Jésus est] Il est lui-même une victime expiatoire pour nos péchés, et non seulement pour les nôtres, mais aussi pour ceux du monde entier ».

- 1 Timothée 4:9-10 : « C'est là une parole certaine et entièrement digne d'être reçue... parce que nous mettons notre espérance dans le Dieu vivant, qui est le Sauveur de tous les hommes, surtout des croyants ».

- Jean 1:29 : « Le lendemain, il [Jean le Baptiste] vit Jésus venant à lui, et il dit : Voici l'Agneau de Dieu, qui ôte le péché du monde ! ».

- Jean 3:17 : « Dieu, en effet n'a pas envoyé son Fils dans le monde pour qu'il juge le monde, mais pour que le monde soit sauvé par lui ».

- 1 Jean 4:14 : « Et nous, nous avons vu et nous attestons que le Père a envoyé le Fils comme Sauveur du monde ».

- 2 Corinthiens 5:18-19 : « Et tout cela vient de Dieu, qui nous a réconciliés avec lui et qui nous a donné le ministère de la réconciliation. Car Dieu était en Christ réconciliant le monde avec lui-même, en n'imputant point aux hommes leurs offenses ».

- Colossiens 1:19-20 : « Car Dieu a voulu faire habiter toute plénitude en lui; il a voulu par lui tout réconcilier avec lui-même, tant ce qui est sur la terre que ce qui est dans les cieux, en faisant la paix par lui, par le sang de sa croix ».

- 1 Timothée 2:3-6 : « Cela est bon et agréable devant Dieu notre Sauveur, qui veut que tous les hommes soient sauvés et parviennent à la connaissance de la

vérité. Car il y a un seul Dieu, et aussi un seul médiateur entre Dieu et les hommes, Jésus-Christ homme, qui s'est donné lui-même en rançon pour tous ».

- Hébreux 2:9 : « Jésus, nous le voyons couronné de gloire et d'honneur à cause de la mort qu'il a soufferte; ainsi par la grâce de Dieu, il a souffert la mort pour tous ».

- 2 Corinthiens 5:14 « Car l'amour de Christ nous presse, parce que nous estimons que si un seul est mort pour tous, tous donc sont morts ».

- Romains 8:31-32 : « Que dirons-nous donc à l'égard de ces choses? Si Dieu est pour nous, qui sera contre nous? Lui qui n'a point épargné son propre Fils, mais qui l'a livré pour nous tous, comment ne nous donnera-t-il pas aussi toutes choses avec lui? ».

- Tite 2:11 : « Car la grâce de Dieu, source de salut pour tous les hommes, a été manifestée ».

À partir de tous ces textes bibliques clairs, nous concluons que Jésus est mort pour toute l'humanité. Selon nous, ces passages réfutent clairement l'idée d'une rédemption réservée qu'à un certain nombre (limitée) de personnes.

Qu'en est-il de la position selon laquelle la rédemption universelle n'est pas encore donnée à tous, mais qu'elle attend un moment futur où chacun pourra alors effectivement recevoir ce qui n'est pour le moment que potentiellement le leur ? Cette question est fondamentale pour plusieurs au sein de la Communion Internationale dans la Grâce, compte tenu de notre passé armianiste et de la prépondérance de cette pensée dans la plupart des cercles conservateurs, évangéliques, protestants d'Amérique du Nord.

Le salut, une nouvelle création (régénération), et non une simple transaction

Les Écritures nous enseignent que le salut ne doit pas être considéré comme une simple transaction, effectuée à un moment donné dans l'histoire et qui paierait pour nos péchés. Ce n'est pas un don qui est « acquis » à un certain prix, et qui ne serait donné qu'en échange d'une repentance personnelle et de la foi.

Cette vision des choses est basée sur une logique qui représente le salut comme une transaction. Même si elle contient certains éléments de vérité, elle constitue une vue tronquée du salut et porte en elle les bases de beaucoup d'erreurs. Les Écritures, au lieu de parler de transaction, présentent le salut comme une nouvelle création. En Jésus, qui est pleinement Dieu et pleinement homme (dans son humanité, il est le représentant et le substitut parfait de toute l'humanité), tous les êtres humains ont été recréés. Par cette régénération, ils sont justifiés, réconciliés et sauvés, justement parce qu'ils sont inclus en Jésus et dans l'œuvre accomplie par son incarnation, sa vie, sa mort, sa résurrection et son ascension.

Jésus a accompli tout cela *pour* nous et *en* nous (comme l'un de nous). Jésus est l'un pour tous, tous en un. Ainsi nous comprenons à partir des Écritures que... :

- quand Jésus est mort, toute l'humanité est morte avec lui ;

- quand Jésus est ressuscité, toute l'humanité est ressuscitée à une nouvelle vie avec lui ;

- quand Jésus est monté au ciel, toute l'humanité est montée avec lui et s'est assise avec lui, aux côtés du Père.

Où trouvons-nous cette vision dans les Écritures? Considérez les versets suivants :

- 2 Corinthiens 5:14-16 : « Car l'amour de Christ nous presse, parce que nous estimons que si un seul est mort pour tous, tous donc sont morts; et qu'il est mort pour tous, afin que ceux qui vivent ne vivent plus pour eux-mêmes, mais pour celui qui est mort et ressuscité pour eux ».

- Romains 5:1, 2-19 : « C'est pourquoi, comme par un seul homme le péché est entré dans le monde, et par le péché la mort, et qu'ainsi la mort s'est étendue sur tous les hommes, parce que tous ont péché... Mais il n'en est pas du don gratuit comme de l'offense; car, si par l'offense d'un seul il en est beaucoup qui sont morts [combien? Tous, cf verset 12] , à plus forte raison la grâce de Dieu et le don de la grâce venant d'un seul homme, Jésus-Christ, ont-ils été abondamment répandus sur beaucoup! [Combien? Là encore tous, verset 12]... Si par l'offense d'un seul la mort a régné par lui seul, à plus forte raison ceux qui reçoivent l'abondance de la grâce et du don de la justice régneront-ils dans la vie par Jésus-Christ lui seul, [car Dieu a déjà fait le nécessaire par le sacrifice de Christ pour tous (verset 15) – tout ce qu'il reste à faire à chacun c'est de l'accepter (verset 17), et qu'ainsi ils puissent en faire l'expérience personnellement – mais cette expérience n'est pas ce qui provoque son existence] ainsi donc comme par une seule offense la condamnation a atteint tous les hommes, de même par un seul acte de justice la justification qui donne la vie s'étend à tous les hommes. Car, comme par la désobéissance d'un seul homme beaucoup ont été rendus pécheurs [combien? Tous, versets 12 et 18], de même par l'obéissance d'un seul beaucoup seront rendus justes [c'est-à-dire justifiés (verset 18.)] ». Ces versets démontrent, une fois de plus, que Dieu a déjà prévu le don de la justification par le sacrifice de Christ pour tous. Tout ce qu'il reste à faire à chacun est d'accepter cette réalité pour qu'ainsi il puisse en profiter et apprécier ce don.

- Colossiens 1:15-17 : « Le Fils [Jésus] est l'image du Dieu invisible, le premier né de toute la création. Car en lui ont été créées toutes les choses qui sont dans les cieux et sur la terre, les visibles et les invisibles, trônes, dignités, dominations, autorités. Tout a été créé par lui et pour lui. Il est avant toutes choses, et toutes choses subsistent en lui ». [Quelle déclaration étonnante sur la nature de Jésus : qui est à la fois celui qui a créé et qui soutient tout le cosmos (dont toute l'humanité), quand il est mort, toute la création (tous les êtres humains inclus) est descendue avec lui « donc tous sont morts » (2 Corinthiens 5:14). Et quand il est ressuscité, nous sommes tous ressuscités; et quand il a fait son ascension, nous sommes tous montés. Jésus inclut tout le monde (« tous ») dans son incarnation, sa vie, sa mort, son enterrement, sa résurrection et son ascension].

- Romains 6:10 : « Car il est mort [Jésus], et c'est pour le péché qu'il est mort une fois pour toutes ». [Remarque : il n'est pas écrit « mourra » quand ils se tourneront vers lui, pour le recevoir mais « une fois », au passé, pour « toutes »].

- Romains 8:1 : « Il n'y a donc maintenant aucune condamnation pour ceux qui sont en Jésus-Christ ». Ce n'est pas notre foi personnelle qui nous place « en Christ ». C'est en vertu de ce qu'il a accompli il y a fort longtemps pour toute l'humanité. Par conséquent « n'imputant point aux hommes leurs offenses » (2 Corinthiens 5:19) et qu'il n'y a donc « maintenant plus de condamnation » (c'est-à-dire que Dieu a pardonné à toute l'humanité). Cette réconciliation, ce pardon, devient une réalité pour chacun par une repentance et une foi personnelles.

- Éphésiens 2:4-10 « Mais Dieu qui est riche en miséricorde, à cause du grand amour dont il nous a aimés, nous qui étions morts par nos offenses, nous a rendus vivants avec Christ (c'est par grâce que vous êtes sauvés) ; il nous a ressuscités ensemble, et nous a fait asseoir ensemble dans les lieux

célestes, en Jésus-Christ, afin de montrer dans les siècles à venir l'infinie richesse de sa grâce par sa bonté envers nous en Jésus-Christ. Car c'est par la grâce [la bonté de Dieu] que vous êtes sauvés, par le moyen de la foi. Et cela ne vient pas de vous, c'est le don de Dieu. Ce n'est point par les œuvres, afin que personne ne se glorifie. Car nous sommes son ouvrage, ayant été créés en Jésus-Christ pour de bonnes œuvres, que Dieu a préparées d'avance, afin que nous les pratiquions ».

- 1 Pierre 1:18-20 : « Vous savez que ce n'est pas par des choses périssables, par de l'argent ou de l'or, que vous avez été rachetés de la vaine manière de vivre que vous aviez héritée de vos pères... mais par le sang précieux de Christ... Il [Jésus] a été prédestiné [pour sauver l'humanité], avant la fondation du monde, il fut manifesté à la fin des temps, à cause de vous ».

Dr Joseph Tkach a écrit sur la recréation en Christ dans sa lettre co-ouvrière d'avril 2008 :

« L'Évangile, c'est une relation; une relation avec Dieu rendue réelle par l'action de Dieu lui-même, en Christ, en notre faveur. Ce n'est pas un ensemble d'exigences, ni une simple acceptation intellectuelle d'un ensemble de faits religieux ou bibliques. Jésus-Christ ne s'est pas simplement présenté à notre place sur le siège du jugement ddivin, il nous a attirés en lui, et nous a fait devenir, avec lui et en lui, par l'Esprit-Saint, les enfants aimés de Dieu.

« Sa [Dieu] divine puissance nous a donné tout ce qui contribue à la vie et à la piété, au moyen de la connaissance de celui qui nous a appelés par sa propre gloire et par sa vertu; celles-ci nous assurent de sa part les plus grandes et les plus précieuses promesses, afin que par elles vous deveniez participants de la nature divine, en fuyant la corruption qui existe dans le monde par la convoitise » (2 Pierre 1:3-4). Ainsi, nous apprenons des Écritures que

l'œuvre de salut de Jésus a une envergure universelle. En cela, nous saisissons l'énorme importance de l'incarnation de Jésus, par laquelle, notre Créateur, qui soutient toutes choses, la Parole de Dieu, « devint chair » (Jean 1:14). Celui en qui tout le cosmos (y compris toute l'humanité) trouve sa vie et son mouvement (Actes 17:28) est devenu pleinement humain tout en restant pleinement Dieu. Ainsi, tout ce qui arrive à Jésus arrive à toute l'humanité (et de surcroît à l'univers tout entier qu'il continue de soutenir).

Plusieurs théologies enseignent une vue tronquée de l'incarnation, en la présentant comme une sorte d'arrangement temporaire pour payer, par Jésus, le salaire des péchés des hommes. Toutefois l'Écriture présente l'incarnation comme un changement permanent en Dieu lui-même par Jésus, qui, comme notre représentant, a forgé un changement permanent dans l'humanité elle-même.

Et cette nouvelle situation se poursuit toujours, car Jésus continue, pour toujours, d'être pleinement Dieu et pleinement humain. Ainsi, le miracle de l'incarnation n'est pas un événement qui s'est produit « une fois pour toutes », dans le passé. Il s'agit d'un changement de la manière même dont l'univers est « connecté », c'est une recréation. En fait, l'incarnation a tout changé pour toujours, en commençant par le début de l'histoire humaine, jusqu'à la fin de l'histoire, au fur et à mesure qu'elle se déroule.

Paul en fait un argument dans Romains 7 verset 4 où il dit que même si nous sommes vivants, nous avons été mis à mort par le corps de Christ, en ce qui concerne la loi. La mort de Jésus, dans la chair pour nous, lors d'un événement historique, est une réalité présente qui s'applique à toute l'humanité (passée, présente et future). C'est ce fait cosmique qui sous-tend toute l'histoire. Cette compréhension est renforcée dans Colossiens 3:3 : « vous êtes

morts », dit l'apôtre Paul, en s'adressant à des Colossiens bien vivants, « et votre vie est cachée avec Christ en Dieu ». Donc, avant même que nous mourrions littéralement, nous sommes déjà morts par la mort de Jésus et vivants par la résurrection de Jésus.

Ce point est peut-être encore plus clairement exposé dans Éphésiens 2:5,6 où Paul déclare que puisque nous sommes déjà morts dans le mystère de la mort de substitution de Jésus, nous avons tous aussi (maintenant déjà) été « rendus vivants avec lui », et sommes « ressuscités ensemble » et « assis ensemble » dans les lieux célestes. En d'autres termes, Dieu en Christ, n'entre pas seulement dans l'histoire à un moment donné dans le temps, mais il est aussi dans un présent éternellement contemporain à chaque moment de l'histoire, présent avec toute l'humanité incluse en lui.

Le théologien trinitaire, Robert F. Capon, parle de cette vérité dans son livre *Royaume, Grâce et Jugement* (page 410) :

« Le mystère manifesté dans la mort de Jésus nous pardonne maintenant, car il est tout aussi **présent maintenant** qu'il l'était au moment de sa mort à la croix; le mystère manifesté par sa résurrection nous rétablit maintenant parce qu'il est tout aussi présent maintenant qu'il l'était lorsqu'il quitta le tombeau; et le mystère manifesté dans son jugement nous justifie maintenant parce qu'il est tout aussi présent maintenant qu'il le sera lorsqu'il apparaîtra dans sa gloire ». **NL**

**À SUIVRE DANS LE PROCHAIN
NUMÉRO DE NORTHERN LIGHT**

By Gary Moore

National Director

Peacemakers

God has always lived in relationship. Father, Son and Spirit have eternally engaged in a life characterized by love—a great gift exchange that involved mutual submission and service. Within the Godhead there is and always has been peace.

The theology our fellowship teaches is at times called “Adoption” theology, because it emphasizes the awesome future God desires for each human being. Through and in Christ we are the adopted children of God. Further, we are thereby given the opportunity to participate in the very life of the triune God—a life characterized by concern for one another and by service.

Love is the primary characteristic of God (1 John 4:8,16). The kind of self sacrific-

ing love we are talking about comes into our lives through the transformational activity of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). This sort of Godly love is described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 and clearly transcends any human definition of that term. Amazingly, it never breaks down, “never fails”.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Matthew 5:9

As God's children, his will is that we respond to him, come to know him and through the work of the Spirit and become gradually transformed closer to the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). This allows us to be examples to

the world of a better way to live (Matthew 5:14-16).

In a very practical way, this means that as the children of God we will be peacemakers in the world (Matthew 5:8).

Clearly, our world is laden with conflict of various forms, on a variety of levels.

Often pride is at the root of these problems. When people and nations angle only for self-interest, without taking into account the interests of others, it is virtually inevitable that conflict will result. Yet, Jesus taught that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Paul put it this way, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).

God wants his children to reflect a spirit of peace where ever we may be. He wants us to work to reduce conflict, to promote an understanding of the interests and needs of others. It is certainly fine to seek the welfare of yourself and those you love, but that doesn't need to be at the expense of others. God made life to “work” for all people—every person is made in his image and he loves all equally. Things are designed so, in the end, all can prosper and find well-being. The term “eternal life” in the Bible has reference to a quality of life, not only to life without end. We aren't in a competition with our neighbour, but rather we are intended to work for the welfare of all. That is God's way. It is how he lives, and is the life our triune God is drawing us toward.

When we do this—seek peace, make peace, reduce tension and avoid conflict—we live the life God lives and the life he intends for his children.

That is why peacemakers are called the children of God. Rather fitting, isn't it?**NL**



Clearly, our world is laden with conflict of various forms, on a variety of levels.

de Gary Moore
directeur national

Artisans de paix

Dieu a toujours été en relation. La vie du Père, du Fils et du Saint-Esprit est depuis toute éternité caractérisée par l'amour. Elle constitue un merveilleux échange de don qui implique la soumission et le service mutuels. La paix a toujours régné au sien de la trinité.

La théologie qu'enseigne notre association est parfois appelée théologie de l'adoption parce qu'elle met l'accent sur le futur grandiose dont Dieu désire que chaque être humain jouisse. En Christ, et par lui, nous sommes enfants de Dieu par adoption. En outre, nous avons ainsi l'occasion de participer à la vie même du Dieu trinitaire. Celle-ci est caractérisée par le souci et le service mutuels.

L'amour est la caractéristique primaire de Dieu (1 Jean 4:8,16). Ce type d'amour sacrificiel, dont nous parlons, pénètre nos vies par l'action formatrice du Saint-Esprit. (Romains 5:5). L'apôtre Paul décrit cet amour divin en 1 Corinthiens 13.1 à 8, celui-ci transcende manifestement toute définition humaine du terme *amour*. Étonnamment, il ne faillit jamais, « il persévère ».

Puisque nous sommes ses enfants, Dieu veut que nous lui répondions, que nous venions à lui et que par l'œuvre du Saint-Esprit nous soyons graduellement transformés en l'image de Christ (2 Corinthiens 3:18). Cette transformation nous permet d'être pour le monde des exemples d'une meilleure manière de vivre (Matthieu 5:14-16).

Ainsi, sur le plan pratique, étant qu'enfant de Dieu nous serons dans le monde des artisans de la paix (Matthieu 5:8).

En effet, notre monde est incontestablement rempli de conflits de diverses formes, sur divers plans. La racine de ces problèmes est souvent l'orgueil. Lorsque les individus et les nations ne cherchent que leurs intérêts propres, sans tenir compte de ceux des autres, les conflits éclatent inévitablement.

Toutefois, Jésus a enseigné que nous devons aimer notre prochain comme nous-mêmes. Paul a exprimé cet enseignement ainsi : « que chacun regarde, non ses propres qualités, mais celles des autres » (Philippiens 2:4).

**« Heureux ceux qui répandent autour d'eux la paix, car Dieu les reconnaîtra pour ses fils. »
Matthieu 5:9**

Dieu désire que ses enfants reflètent un esprit de paix partout où ils se trouvent. Il veut que nous œuvrions de manière à réduire les conflits et à promouvoir la compréhension des intérêts et des besoins des autres. Bien entendu, il est bien de rechercher notre bien-être et celui de nos proches, mais nous ne devons pas le faire aux dépens d'autrui. Dieu a fait en sorte que la vie « fonctionne » pour tout le monde. En effet, il a créé chaque personne à son image et il

les aime toutes également. La création a été conçue de manière à ce qu'en définitive, tous prospèrent et trouvent le bien-être. Dans la Bible, le terme « vie éternelle » désigne une qualité de vie; il n'est pas limité à une vie sans fin. Nous ne sommes pas en compétition avec notre prochain, nous devons plutôt rechercher le bien de tous. C'est la voie de Dieu. C'est de cette façon qu'il vit, et c'est vers ce but que notre Dieu trinitaire nous dirige.

Lorsque nous recherchons la paix, que nous sommes artisans de paix, que nous réduisons les tensions et que nous évitons les conflits, nous vivons comme Dieu, nous vivons la vie qu'il a prévue pour ses enfants.

C'est pour cette raison que les enfants de Dieu sont appelés artisans de paix. Il faudrait que cette appellation nous corresponde, n'est-ce pas? **NL**



En effet, notre monde est incontestablement rempli de conflits de diverses formes, sur divers plans.

By Dorothy Nordstrom

Canadian Women's Ministry
Coordinator

Peace I Leave With You

I honestly don't know where the time has gone. We are already well into 2010 and I distinctly remember toasting the year 2000 with herb tea while the bottle of champagne dated 2000 was forgotten in the fridge. We did use it the next year, but I have come to believe what my father used to tell us when we were children, "Time speeds up when you get older." Both things must be true. I am getting older, (what young person drinks herb tea and forgets the champagne,) and time has definitely sped up.

This past year has been a busy year as I'm sure it has been for all of you. Al and I now have four granddaughters and even though I ache a little more that I used to, I seem to find energy I didn't know I had, when it comes to those little girls. What a blessing grandchildren are.

On the other hand my parents are getting older and this has been a learning experience. Seeing the suffering that sometimes comes with old age is hard. Alzheimer's and living with it requires a love and patience that is more than we have on our own. Many of you have walked this road before me, and understand how difficult it can be. The lesson that this life is temporary really hits home. The peace of God provided at times like this is precious.

I have been blessed to have been able to visit Ottawa, Toronto, and Winnipeg. Where ever I go it feels like family, our growth in God's grace has opened the flood gates of love for each other. Every day I awake to a new day excited about what is ahead.

A few weeks ago I watched a TV documentary that showed a packed theatre of people seeking words of wisdom and the way to peace from the Dalai Lama. Many were in tears as they sought to speak with him or just to have him look into their eyes. It actually hurt me to hear him referred to as holy. After all he is just a man. I am sure the Dalai Lama has wisdom to offer from years of life experi-

ence but he cannot give us the answers we seek.

We live in a world that is desperately seeking peace, many willing to look anywhere to find answers except to God—the true source of wisdom and peace.

We live in a world that is desperately seeking peace...

As years come and go we wish each other a "Happy New Year" people everywhere are still searching for happiness. "Peace on earth" is the cry of the human heart. Before we enter a New Year we go through the season of celebrating the birth of Christ. Upon Jesus' birth the host of angels declared "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth Peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14 KJV). Jesus is the answer to peace, if only we would pay attention. Many hear the gospel but don't really get it.

As some of you know, I have been working in a senior's residence for the last two years. I enjoy my job and I love the people but even in old age many are lacking peace in their lives. When I see people at the close of their lives still searching, still hurt, angry, and holding grudges, unforgiving, unhappy, and dissatisfied with life, it breaks my heart. It is not possible to have happiness without peace.

Before Jesus died he comforted his disciples and left us all with these words; "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Jesus gave us the answer to happiness he left us peace.

If we look to the world for

answers to peace we will never find them. Peace is a gift Jesus left us when he went back to the Father. Peace is a Gift of the Comforter, The Holy Spirit. When we accept the forgiveness that is offered and come under the grace of God we will have true peace.

This doesn't mean we have no pain or grief—it means that no matter what life brings those who trust God we will have a wonderful sense of the peace of God that transcends all understanding (Philippians.4:7). When we deeply understand that we are forgiven, that Jesus died for us, that we are loved and that his death purchased our peace with God—we become free to let go of the feelings that stop us from forgiving others, free of hurts and grudges and filled with peace and joy.

My prayer as I go to work each day is that I can be an instrument of peace in a hurting world and all Glory goes to the God who has forgiven me and left me with his peace. **NL**



Even in old age many are lacking peace in their lives.

Peace—As It Is In Heaven

By David Sheridan

*Pastor, Grace & Truth Fellowship,
Red Deer, and Lethbridge
congregations*

An argument broke out in heaven. A recently-arrived preacher complained that a Toronto taxi cab driver was rewarded with a higher place than he. “Our policy here in heaven is to reward results,” God explained. “Was your congregation well attuned to you whenever you gave a sermon?” “Well,” the pastor admitted, “some in the congregation fell asleep from time to time.” “Exactly,” said God, “and when people rode in this man’s taxi, they not only stayed awake, they even prayed!” No peace at the pearly gates!

Desserts spelled backwards is stressed!

The breaking of New Year’s Resolutions to lose weight by cutting back on mouth-watering desserts can lead to being stressed; maybe that is why desserts spelled backwards is stressed! Pills are not the answer either. One man tried a

brand new experimental pill to improve his virility. It backfired and he got haemorrhoids! A sign outside a church read “Don’t let worry kill you; let the Church help.” Some churches have a cemetery beside them. Although stress-filled bickering goes on inside the church, at least those in the graves outside remain

Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition....(Philippians 4:6-7)

serenely peaceful!

Pax Vobis

Pope Benedict XVI opened the 2009 Christmas Eve Mass with the traditional wish for peace in Latin: Pax vobis (“Peace be with you”). The faithful

responded: “Et cum spiritu tuo” (“And also with you”). However minutes earlier a young woman had a different greeting. She jumped a security barrier and dragged the 82 year old Pope to the ground. A nearby French Cardinal fractured his hip in the commotion. No peace in St. Peter’s Basilica!

Anxiety Not Allowed

Though leading a tumultuous life nevertheless the apostle Paul instructed the church at Philippi:

“Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God’s peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its





salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7 *Amplified Bible*). The full dimensions of God’s peaceful nature are beyond human comprehension.

Worry displaced

Here is a paraphrase of what Paul was driving at:

“Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and

settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.” (Philippians 4:6-7 *The Message*). Worries are taken to the Lord in prayer.

Prince of Peace within

The vicarious humanity of Christ leads to his presence within; he is the Prince of Peace having sent the Holy Spirit to comfort us. Keeping our mind, will and emotions centred on Jesus brings rest for the soul—peace, as it is in heaven.

A Simple Prayer:

“Heavenly Father, though my heart is troubled and I am burdened with fears, thank you for allowing me to participate in the love relationship you enjoy with Jesus and the Spirit. Lord, I adore you

for reconciling all humanity including all my loved ones to God and drawing me to you. Thank you for paying for all of my sins—past, present and future. You love me and accept me. I acknowledge and repent of my sins of anxiety and worry. I also enjoy the inner tranquility your forgiveness brings. Holy Spirit, please lead me into the transformed life of the kingdom of God. Almighty God, may your peace be on earth as it is in heaven. I trust you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”**NL**

Peace, War, And Christians: A Primer

By Neil Earle

Pastor, Glendora, California
congregation

There are few better examples of the need to “rightly divide the word” or learn how to study out a subject carefully and prayerfully than this all-important issue of War and Peace.

Human lives are at stake. Yet extreme positions on either side are likely to generate nothing but debate and poisoned relations within the Christian community.

Unknown to many, the historical Christian Church has developed some important perspectives on this subject as the Holy Spirit has led God’s people into truth across time (John 14:26), and does today. So, while a journalistic production such as *Northern Light* cannot set doctrine for ours, or any church, it is good to know the complexity that exists when this subject surfaces.

The Gospel of Peace

To begin with Christians know that their God is “the God of peace” who announces the “Gospel of peace” (Romans 15:33; Ephesians 6:15). “Christians agree that war is evil,” say Clarke and Rakestraw in *Readings in Christian Ethics*, “at least in the sense

Activists argue that God is more concerned about justice than “peace at all costs.”

that it is always caused by moral failure and that it results in terrible pain and devastation of human life and dignity” (page 489).

Beyond that the situation gets more complex. At least four positions and several sub-divisions have evolved under the rubric of war and peace in Christian thought, some of them quite ancient. That alone should give all sides pause, should encourage us to listen to alternative “takes” on Scripture in this area. Nor is this an academic subject. Even now

the Canadian military is engaged in seven years of tough slugging in Afghanistan along with other NATO forces. The issue is real and as long as there are wars it will not drop off the radar screen.

What follows is a brief synopsis of the main positions.

1. **Activism**—close to being the mainstream view. Christians are allowed to support a military effort whenever their country declares war, say activists. The key texts are Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-14. Since rulers and officials are even called “ministers of God” we must submit to state decisions. Activists draw upon numerous Old Testament arguments to support their position—Yahweh’s Holy War against Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16) and the call to exterminate the Canaanite cities in Joshua 6:20-21.

Activists argue that God is more concerned about justice than “peace at all costs.” Even the Sermon on the Mount, they note, gave realistic instruction on submitting to imperfect civil powers (Matthew 5:25-26). Jesus allowed the disciples to take two swords the night he was arrested (Luke 22:38). He praised a centurion for his faith (Luke 7:9) and Cornelius, a Romans officer, was not told to leave military service (Acts 10). Martin Luther was influential for large Protestant denominations on this subject with his theory of the Two Kingdoms. There is the state and there is the church, said Luther, and the two should not be mixed. Submit to princes, he



To begin with Christians know that their God is “the God of peace”....

advised, even if a wise prince is a rare bird. St. Paul's statement is cited: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:13). Paul's qualification, say defenders of the activist position, shows that peace is not always possible.

2. **Pacifism**—total abstinence from war and combat. Conscientious objectors (COs) usually fall under this category. However, even many pacifist groups allow noncombatant activities such as serving in the medical corps or clerical duties, etc. Pacifists argue that Jesus rejected the use of the defensive sword in Matthew 26:52. He said his servants would not fight at this time (John 18:36). Above all he taught love for enemies and not to resist evil (Matthew 5:38-48). Paul added that final vengeance must be left to God (Romans 12:9).

Other positions linked to pacifism include Passive Non-Resistance and Civil Disobedience. As the Mennonite author Willard Swartley argues in *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*, Jesus protested legal violations at both his arrest and his trial but non-violently (John 18:19-24). The Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:15-22) rejected state murder in the name of God. The early apostles determined to obey God rather than men on an issue of conscience (Acts 5:29). Canada has allowed immigrants to this country from the traditional "Peace Churches"—the Friends (Quakers), Mennonites, Moravians, Hutterites, Amish and other groups. Together they have performed a valuable service by holding up Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43).

You've probably seen the bumper sticker that reads, "When Jesus said love your enemies he probably meant you shouldn't kill them." Pacifists make some powerful points. Across Canadian history they have often performed a "conscience function," calling on the public to think through the issue of war much more carefully.

3. **Just War or Selectivism**. This is, more or less, the middle position. Christians can, at times, support war if the conditions are right. In order to defend Christian values against the Nazi threat in World War Two (1939-45), it is argued, the Allies were right to fight. But Just War advocates are selective. They enumerate a number of pre-conditions before a war can be considered just. Some of these ideas go back to Saint Augustine and were reworked by Thomas Aquinas. The paradigm can be summarized as such: Just Cause—self-



defense is a common rationale. Just Intention: peace and justice are the aims, not revenge or conquest. Along with this comes Just Means (proportionality). This means the total good achieved by a victory will outweigh human suffering inflicted. Also, war must be waged by a Just Authority, not outlaw groups such as terrorists. Success should be reasonably and quickly expected. Lethal violence must be used as the last resort and neutrals are to be given fair warning.

It is significant that U.S. President George H. W. Bush cited Just War theory before the First Gulf War in 1991-1992 and President Obama used the phrase in a recent Nobel Prize speech. So these issues are not as academic or as theoretical as might be supposed.

In answer to pacifist citation of Matthew 5:43, just war proponents sometime argue that Jesus was here teaching the ideal ("Be perfect"—Matthew 5:48) or using exaggerated statements to drive home points. In *Christianity Today*, George Knight argued that Jesus did not literally offer the other cheek when struck but protested the abuse (John 18:23). Pacifists respond that adherence to most just war principles are awfully hard to stick to once the dogs of war are loosed and this is where hard, discerning thinking is called for. But perhaps something is lacking in all these perspectives. This introduces the more positive subject of what Christians could be and should be doing to prevent war in the first place. This idea is not as far-fetched as it first sounds.

4. Just Peacemaking. More and more Christian groups see Romans 12: 21 as revealing a divine call to fervent peacemaking: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." In *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of War and Peace*, Glenn Stassen laments that many churches "have no Christian guidance when debates about peace and war arise." Believers are left "undefended against

ideologies that blow back and forth through our nations and churches." Stassen and a growing host of colleagues outline core Biblical principles that could offer guidance to the Christian community as a whole. The emphasis is on Christian activism, first at the community level and then branching out as the need arises. "Jesus was no wooly

Some of Jesus' most elementary teachings get to the root causes of war and conflict. Such statements as judge not, consider the speck in your own eye, the imperative to show mercy, to overlook offenses—these principles contain the seeds of what can work between families, communities, corporations and nations.

idealist," Stassen argues, "He was a Jewish realist. Over and over he warned that the Jewish leadership needed to practice peacemaking or their nation would be destroyed (Luke 19:41-44).

Some of Jesus' most elementary teachings get to the root causes of war and conflict. Such statements as judge not, consider the speck in your own eye, the imperative to show mercy, to overlook offenses—these principles contain the seeds of what can work between families, communities, corporations and nations. According to Stassen, here's how the principles might work in "the real world."

A. Intelligent Non-Violence

By submitting sacrificially to harsh or unjust punishments, peace activists can allow onlookers or neutral parties to reconsider the right and wrong of a situation. This was a tactic used to great effect in the civil rights movement in the American South in the 1950s and 1960s

and in the Oka standoff in eastern Canada in 1991. There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. There is a time to calmly assert your rights, non-violently, which can have great effect upon others. Perhaps their slumbering conscience can be aroused and the opposing force can be convinced to act non-violently. "Jaw, jaw is better than war war," said British war leader Winston Churchill.

B. Looking for Common Ground

Jesus said to agree with one's adversary quickly—a genuine peacemaking initiative (Matthew 5:25). Examples of cooperative initiatives go back as far as Abraham offering Lot the best piece of land to end a looming range dispute (Genesis 13:5-13). This happens on the world scene more often than we might think. It's easy to forget that in 1979 Egypt and Israel came to an agreement and their countries have not fought for 36 years. In the early 1990s South African President F.W. De Klerk released nationalist leader Nelson Mandela from 27 years in prison and an impending catastrophe was averted—peace as policy.

In 1991 George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev reduced 50% of their nation's respective nuclear weapons in 1991 and kept their arsenals off alert status—a boon to everyone! Though it is often the lack of agreement that grabs most of the headlines, in reality men and women of good will are continually parleying and negotiating most of the time (usually behind the scenes) or this world would be in much rougher shape.

C. Taking the First Step.

In 2008 both Australia and Canada apologized to their aboriginal populations for past abuses and violations. A timely, sincere apology keeps offended people from living in a swamp of festering and unhealthy grievances which blocks meaningful progress and goes on down to the third and fourth generation. “First be reconciled to your brother,” Jesus taught as a priority for peacemaking (Matthew 5:24). Bible teachers with negative and even racist agendas in mind sometimes forget that Isaac and Ishmael reconciled (Genesis 25:9) as did Esau and Jacob (Genesis 33:4). Hatred is not genetic. Genuine and proactive peacemaking is possible more often than not in our “real world” disputes.

D. Work for Social and Economic Progress Right Where We Are

Collective attitudes can help determine a nation’s mood. In times of economic

Jesus blessed the peacemakers—they rank high on his list of kingdom attitudes. He will judge us all on the basis of how we have treated the less, the least, the last and the lost (Matthew 25: 31-46).

boom, for example, immigrants are needed to stoke the economic engine. In times of recession they are often scapegoated. Decisions and discussions in the classroom, the board room, the cabinet room or the living room can make a difference and set a tone. “The tongue has the power of life and death”

(Proverbs 18:21). Jesus blessed the peacemakers—they rank high on his list of kingdom attitudes. He will judge us all on the basis of how we have treated the less, the least, the last and the lost (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Obviously much can be done to head off wars and conflicts even if activists and just war advocates believe there is a right time to fight. By outlining practical alternatives avail-

able for Christians it is possible to think beyond stereotyped, knee-jerk reactions. This way, advises Glenn Stassen, Christians “can decide prayerfully which ethic is best for them.” **NL**



Peace-making And Trinitarian Theology

By Jonathan Buck

Pastor, Barrie, Huntsville,
North Bay, Peterborough, and
Sudbury congregations

Trinitarian theology has made peace-making so much easier, I find, because it's changed my attitude to non-Christians. I realize now, because of Jesus' death and ascension, that Christians and non-Christians are in the same boat: we're all raised with Christ in one great united family, making us all brothers and sisters already, so what's left for us to quibble about?

Well, on my side of things at least, what's left to quibble about? Non-Christians will likely go on quibbling, of course, and enjoy starting quarrels and calling God a delusion, but really, it doesn't amount to a hill of beans, does it? A non-Christian can say all the nasty things he likes about God and Christians, but Jesus has already saved him so why should I get my knickers in a twist?

There's no reason for me to be upset, though. When Jesus cried out "It is finished" on the Cross, everything that needed to be done to save every human being was completed at that moment, including Richard Dawkins' salvation

(see the October-December issue of *Northern Light*). The only thing now separating me and Richard is that he hasn't clued in yet he's just as saved as I am. Oh, I admit it bothers me hearing atheists like him waffling on about God being

It was great fun, then, after joining a multi-faith group in town for a monthly chat and goodies, to be able to say when asked why I'd joined them, that "I wanted to see who my friends were going to be for eternity,"...

a "delusion", but he is, in fact, my brother already, and he's going to be my brother forever just as soon as he accepts his salvation is a done deed, too.

I hope, then, that if Richard reads this it'll do wonders for his attitude towards God and Christians. We're not all rednecks out to flay him alive, nor do we all preach

the chuck-the-heathens-in-hell gospel. That's because Jesus' death made us "wall-puller-downers" not "wall-putter-uppers" - to use Paul's analogy in Ephesians 2—and being a wall-knock-er-downer is a powerful peacemaker. It

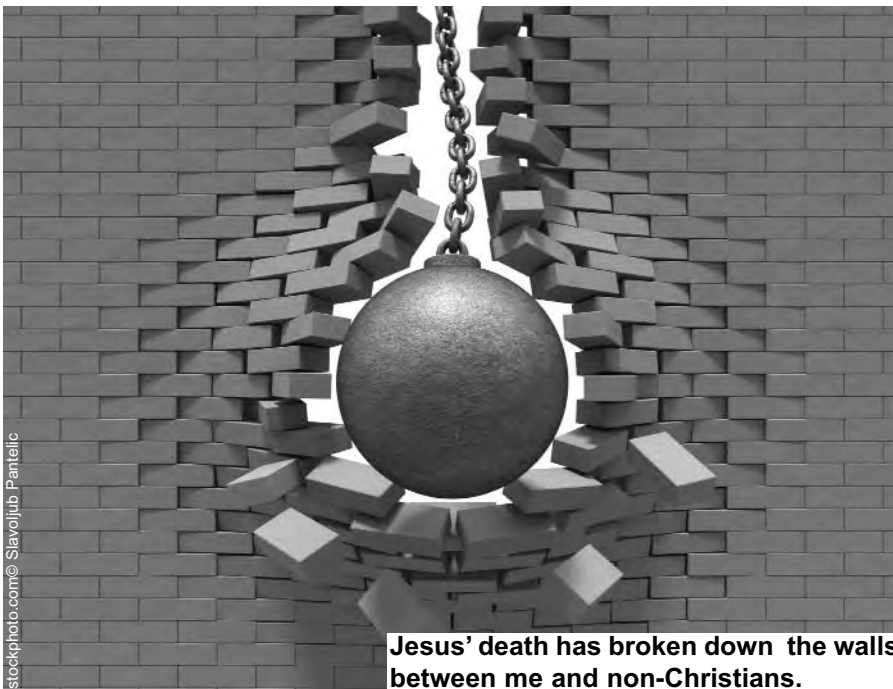
can also be great fun, just like it is with real walls.

I've done demolition work and it was thoroughly satisfying swinging a whacking great sledgehammer like a Viking axe and smashing it into a wall. Sparks flew,

jagged cracks appeared, and with each blow the wall shivered; and then, in an explosion of dust, the final crumble and collapse. It was very satisfying, and great fun! But that's what Jesus' death has given me, a lovely great sledgehammer for doing just that to the walls between me and non-Christians.

It was great fun, then, after joining a multi-faith group in town for a monthly chat and goodies, to be able to say when asked why I'd joined them, that "I wanted to see who my friends were going to be for eternity," referring to all of them, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, etc. It was lovely. In one hugely satisfying blow I whacked them with the good news gospel and it took the wind right out of them. And when asked later by someone curious about our church what I personally thought of Muslims (a 'tester' question to see if we were 'elitist' Christians) I was able to say, "They're all saved, they just don't know it yet." It took the wind right out of that person too, and we've been great friends ever since. Being a wall-puller-downer, I've discovered, is a much better way to go!

It was in the first century too, because Jesus' death brought the deadliest of enemies together in friendship. Imagine the shock it must've been for Jews and



Jesus' death has broken down the walls between me and non-Christians.

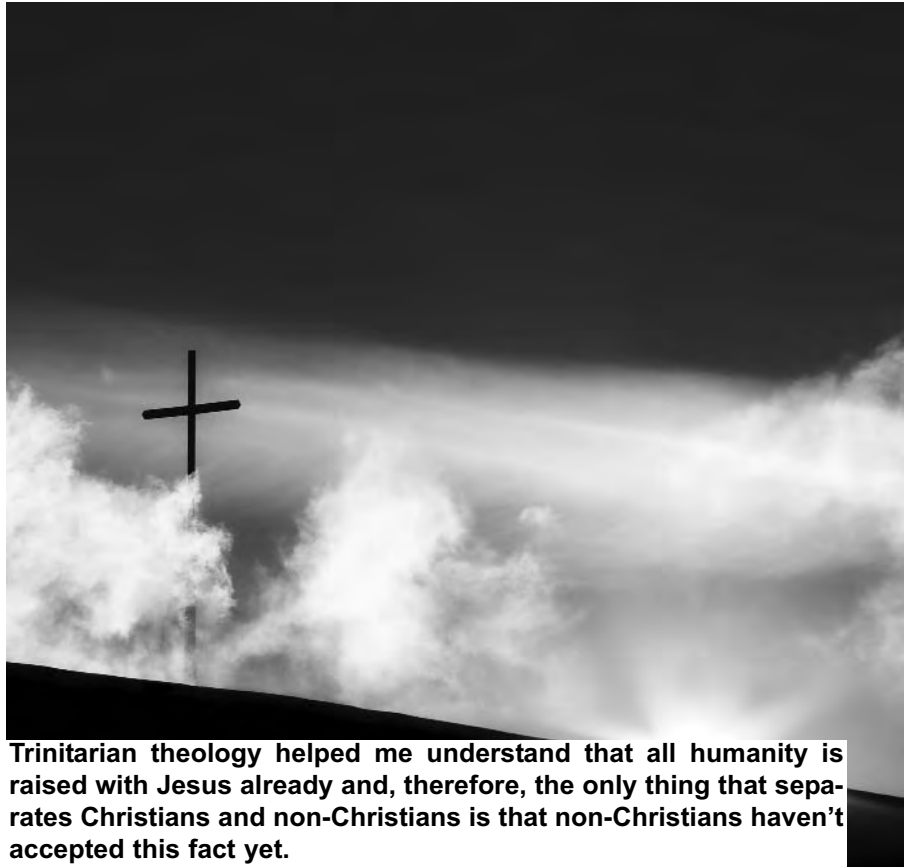
Gentiles though, when only weeks or months after Jesus' death they found themselves sitting next to each other in church! Up to that point they'd built walls between them like those round the Gaza strip, but along comes Jesus Christ, dies for Jew and Gentile alike, knocks the wind totally out of their hatred for each other, and puts them in the same church together!

Imagine how weird that must've been for the Jews, first of all, who, up to that point, had viewed all Gentiles like many Christians today view Richard Dawkins. But imagine being a Gentile too, finding himself sitting next to a Jew who didn't leap out of his seat like a scared rabbit, spitting and screaming "Gentile dog, unclean, unclean!" It was a first, a staggering first to be more true to the point, because there hadn't been a sledgehammer large enough yet to knock that wall down.

But Jesus did it. His death tore the wall down between Jew and Gentile with as much satisfying shock as the tearing of the Temple curtain. And imagine the joy it must have given him seeing Jew and Gentile greet each other for the first time ever as friends.

"Ah, but they were all Christians," someone could say. But when Jesus died, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5, "One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death," meaning non-Christians too. "All this comes from God," Paul continues, "who settled the relationship between us and him, and then he called us to settle our relationships with each other" (*The Message*, verses 14-20). And who is the "each other" here? It's "everyone," Paul writes, not just Christians, because Jesus' death puts all humans "in the same boat." And now that we're in the same boat, we've got a job to do—"settle our relationships with each other."

There are some people we can't settle our relationships with in this life, of



Trinitarian theology helped me understand that all humanity is raised with Jesus already and, therefore, the only thing that separates Christians and non-Christians is that non-Christians haven't accepted this fact yet.

course, including dangerous people we steer well clear of—like the preachers of false gospels—but where possible, Paul writes in Galatians 6:10, "let us work together for the benefit of all," and in Philippians 2:15, "Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God." And who are the "people" Paul is talking about here? "The world" (same verse), not just Christians. And what "glimpse of the living God" do we provide the world with? That he's working "for the benefit of all," their glimpse of which is his church preaching a message of reconciliation, and living it in their relationships with everyone, non-Christians included.

Trinitarian theology helped me understand that all humanity is raised with Jesus already and, therefore, the only thing that separates Christians and non-Christians is that non-Christians haven't

accepted this fact yet. When they do accept it, we'll be brothers and sisters for eternity. We're already brothers and sisters but it's their acceptance of it that seals it forever. And, even better, we can start that process rolling in the here and now, so we're not just finding out who our friends are going to be for eternity, but making them our friends in this life, as well. **NL**

By Philip Baldwin

The Cup Of Blessing

There is a Jewish tradition that at the conclusion of a festive meal on the Sabbath, a holy day or other special meal, the host would fill “the cup of blessing” with wine and summon all those who were present to recite the benedictions from Deuteronomy 33. Most likely the cup of blessing is first of the two cups that we read about in Luke 22.

There are at least seven rules that regulate the proper use of this cup of blessing at a Jewish meal. But these regulations can also be related to Jesus, our Saviour, and applied to each of us, so that we may be a blessing to ourselves, our families, and to our communities of faith.

The first requirement is that the cup must be washed on the inside. The second is that it be rinsed on the outside.

Jesus, the Passover Lamb, lived a sinless life—without spot or blemish in his thoughts, words and deeds—as the necessary condition for his atoning sacrifice (1 Peter 1:18–19). From a distinctly Christian perspective, inner cleanliness is a prerequisite, a preliminary requirement for outer cleanliness (Matthew 23:25–26). Even though cleaning the inside of a pot or cup doesn’t automatically make the outside clean, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is supposed to be transforming us inside and out, day by day: in our thinking and our attitudes, as well as in our speech and actions.

The third regulation is that the cup be a finished product, without chips or cracks.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that, for Jesus, his “finishing”—his perfection—came at a terrible price (Hebrews 5:8–9). Although he suffered horribly in a physical sense, his godly obedience to the Father had no chips or cracks. He was able to pray to the Father, “Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

In Christian terms, we need to acknowledge the chips and cracks that exist in us, repenting of our own sin, repenting of our mistakes, and asking for forgiveness for them, calling on our Lord to continue the process of change in us that will finally bring us to his righteousness at the resurrection.

In Christian terms, we need to acknowledge the chips and cracks that exist in us...

The fourth rule is that the cup be filled with wine to the brim.

Jesus said that he came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). He lived a full life, filled with the Spirit, constantly doing the things that showed his Father’s will: healing, teaching, forgiving, reconciling. We are called to live our lives filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), displaying the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).

The fifth requirement is that part of the wine be given to others in the household.

Jesus himself was generous with his time and his energy and his mission:

- on the way to accomplish one healing, he stopped to perform another (Luke 8: 40–56)

- he chose the early morning to pray and the daylight to minister to people (Mark 1:35–45)

- he welcomed little children and blessed them (Luke 18:15–16)

- he had compassion on the large crowds that followed him (Matthew 9:35–36)



As disciples of Jesus, we can be generous because God has been generous to us; he promises to bless us with all that we need—and more (2 Corinthians 9:8).

The sixth regulation is that one ought to invite worthy disciples to share in festive times.

Rabbis recognize that all Jews have a stake in the fostering their religious heritage. Likewise Jesus made no distinction between the scribes who had great learning and the simple faith of ordinary people. He offered his life to all who approached him, not just the rich or the young or the intelligent or the socialites.

The spiritual gifts we have from the Holy Spirit—teaching, discipleship, evangelism, hospitality, generosity, comforting—are found in faithful people from all walks of life and all levels of society: rich or poor, slave or free, well educated or not. We share the work of ministry in the kingdom of God with all believers.

The seventh rule is that the cup of blessing should be taken with both hands.

Religious people tend to stress the virtue of *giving*, but this rule reminds us that there are times when we ought to *receive*—and with both hands. Jesus himself is the greatest blessing in our lives because he took the cup, not only of blessing, but also of suffering, with both hands to accomplish our salvation (Luke 22:42). On the cross, he refused the vinegar that was likely mixed with a pain-killer, and he experienced utter alienation from God. Because of those experiences, we can be assured that he sympathizes with us (Hebrews 4:15–16), and we can have the assurance that we will receive help our time of need.

Christians have all been prepared to do good works in God's world, but in order for these gifts "work," there must be receivers: people to make their needs and their prayer requests known and

accept the service of others. This is the kind of leadership that Jesus exemplified and taught (Matt. 20; John 13; Rom. 15), which can only be accomplished when there is a receiver, someone to accept

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the comfort, encouragement, help, ministry, or teaching of his disciples. We should consider this "receiving with both hands" from two perspectives: "Am I willing to receive?" and "Am I serving in a way that allows others to receive?" (Matt. 5:16).

How can you be a blessing to the people around you by fulfilling these regulations in a Christian sense? **NL**

Phil and his wife Susan are living in New Zealand, where he is pastoring a house church congregation in Christchurch and she is the Vicar of the Anglican parish of Malvern.

Thanksgiving Celebration of Christ 2009

Over one hundred members from across Canada and the Western US gathered together at the Riverside Conference Center, beside Lake Okanagan, Penticton, BC, to celebrate and give thanks to our Savior during the week beginning with the Canadian Thanksgiving weekend.

The participants were refreshed and inspired with heartfelt worship, uplifting and informative messages and seminars, supportive and encouraging fellowship and fun-filled social activities.

Our guest speaker this year was John Halford, editor of the US church's magazine, "Odyssey." John gave a sermon on the opening day and an all day seminar on Monday. Calgary pastor, Colin Wallace, and his wife Beverley joined us in midweek to present a sermon and seminar, and Al and Dorothy Nordstrom—pastors of the Grand Prairie, Westlock and Evansburg congregations—were with us all week. Al gave a sermon and Dorothy a seminar.

Gary Moore, Canadian National Director, and his wife, Wendy, with daughter Kylie, joined us for the first and final weekend. Gary gave two sermons, his second message concluding the Celebration. Wendy gave an African Update slide show at the close of our superbly catered Thanksgiving Dinner on Sunday evening.

On Tuesday evening our annual BBQ dinner aboard the historic paddle steamer, S.S. Sicamous, included a lively and much enjoyed sing-long as well as a Bingo game. An all-day bus tour to a cheese making factory then to an orchard provided a relaxing day on Wednesday, followed by a movie evening. In-door bowling, a senior's luncheon, and a games evening were all part of the activity-packed schedule.

Once again we were able to present the local representative of the Penticton Food Bank, Christine Simmons, with a record donation of \$2,520 for their winter needs.

This Thanksgiving Celebration, has now become a permanent annual tradition and provides a genuine spiritual boost to those who attend—just ask any of the attendees!

The Convention Center has already been booked for Oct 19-16, 2010. If you are interested in attending and would like to have more details, please contact Craig and Debbie Minke, email: cminke@telus.net or mail: 22899 14th Ave, Langley, BC V2Z 2W8.

Roy Page



Ottawa Women's Retreat, 2009

The Ninth Ottawa Women's Retreat was held at Maison Notre-Dame-De-La-Providence in Orleans, Ontario, September 25 to the 27th, 2009. Ladies attended from Ottawa, Smiths Falls, Montreal, Cornwall, and Kingston. The evening service began with prayer by Nicole Lim and we were led in song by Archangel Chenier. Linda Rabey encouraged us to relax, make new friends and of course become spiritually charged. Our "secret sisters" chosen last year were revealed that evening.

Saturday morning Dorothy Nordstrom, an elder from Edmonton, Alberta. She spoke on our freedom and joy in Christ and of his love for all of mankind in her presentation "The Mary Miracles". When God spoke to Mary with the news of Christ's impending birth, her attitude was, "May it be as you have said"—an attitude of complete surrender. Dorothy added how very important it is that people see Christ in us, nothing but Christ.

Lori Rand introduced the new idea of being our "sister's keeper" by each of us praying for someone in our church area, as an outreach of love.

Lillian Faubert, Agnes McBride and Jessie Delahunt were honoured in our "Senior Moments" for their example, and steadfastness to God, that leaves a much valued inspiration for all. All three ladies were presented with a cozy quilt made by one lady present at the retreat.

Saturday afternoon, after special music, Vickie Brebner spoke about "God In Her". In her presentation she asked, "Do we as women equally share God's image?" She explained that God displays his feminine side in his compassion and sacrifice for us.

Sunday morning after prayer and songs of worship Vicki continued in part two of her discourse on women bearing God's image. She explained that Jesus did not see gender— but one of his creations. Christ talked to women personally and presented them as valued witnesses of his truth. Women have the same responsibility as men to evangelize.

We all benefited from great food, fellowship, and amazing music. The women's retreat 2009 was exciting, fun filled, and spiritually uplifting. We all look forward to next year.

Colleen Briault

By Bill Hall

Editor, Northern Light Magazine

“Peace Be With You”

Have you ever read a passage of scripture over and over again and seemingly continually miss something? For me it happens most often when I read Jesus' conversations with his disciples.

John 20:19 comes to my mind when “peace” is discussed.

Perhaps you are familiar with the story. For the followers of Jesus, the events of the past few days have been quite tragic. They've seen the teacher that they followed: tried, crucified, killed, and his body placed in a tomb. Their world had been blown apart. Maybe deep inside they had felt that this person really would fulfill the hope of Israel and had come to make them God's chosen nation once again. For them, the messianic hope was alive and well in the person of Jesus.

But no more. Instead, he was executed along with common criminals and his body lay in a cold hole in a rock. Not only that, as they had been branded as his followers, they feared they would suffer the same fate.

So on the evening of resurrection Sunday, we find the disciples huddled behind locked doors stressing about their future: “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19).

“Peace be with you,” seems to me like a pretty innocuous greeting. Yet, the word *Shalom* we translate “peace” is a term or word that has a lot of ‘stuff’ packed into it.

Depending on the context, *Shalom*, can mean: the cessation of war or conflict, friendship between companions, contentment, well-being, security, and a number of other thoughts (see

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, article Peace, p 883, Walter A. Elwell, editor).

“Peace be with you,” seems to me like a pretty innocuous greeting. Yet, the word *Shalom* we translate “peace” is a term or word that has a lot of ‘stuff’ packed into it.

Shalom also express that time described in Isaiah 9:6-7: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and *peace* there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.”

Biblical scholar George R. Beasley-Murray in his commentary on John makes this point clear, “Never had that ‘common word’ been so filled with meaning as when Jesus uttered it on Easter evening. All that the prophets had poured into the *shalom* as the epitome of blessings of the kingdom of God had essentially been realized in the redemptive deeds of the incarnate Son of God, ‘lifted up’ for the salvation of the world. His ‘Shalom!’ on Easter evening is the complement of ‘It is finished’ on the cross, for the peace of reconciliation and life from God is now imparted. ‘Shalom!’ accordingly is supremely the Easter greeting.”

For the hearers of those words of greeting that night, the Messiah had come, was standing in their midst, and that they had indeed begun to live in the new age. The age of peace and the kingdom of God.

Like them, we have also been given the opportunity to experience and live in the

Shalom that Jesus shared with those individuals so long ago. **NL**



Caring for Creation

A gesture of service has become a passion for building community through gardening.

In 2008, I decided to become involved in a community garden. When I learned that Grow Regina was developing a new community garden location being established on a 3.5 acre public park and spots were still available, I was excited. Although in its first year at their new location, the dedicated volunteers had made remarkable progress in its development and I was inspired to become involved.

There is something special that has happened since I first volunteered to be on the Board of Grow Regina. God has taken a somewhat invisible Christian and placed her in a position of leadership. As the season continued and I reflected on this experience, I thought back to my prayers earlier that winter, inspired by our pastor, Eric Warren, when I asked God how I can contribute to overcoming the problems in our community. How can I make a difference?

Now, I am involved in Grow Regina with a mandate is to enhance the social, economic and cultural well being of Regina residents through community gardening. I am amazed how God has weaved my skills, relationships, experiences of success and failures in to a tapestry of service for which I am individually prepared and passionate.

I have realized from this experience, that caring for God's creation is more than just caring for the garden and plants, but also caring the people who come to the garden. I have come to cherish many of the gardeners who shared their stories of struggle and overcoming and how the garden has played a role in their physical and mental well being, as it has mine.

Karen Walkins attends the Pathway Community Church in Regina SK

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