

if there is to be salvation. God-centered theology bows with the Apostle Paul before the sovereignty of God in salvation, and marvels at his grace.

But to preach the Cross in its offense could become a frightening caricature if the *love* of the Cross were not proclaimed in the compassion of Christ. In a suffering world Christians both proclaim and manifest present salvation and joy in Christ. The new life that can rejoice in suffering finds expression in a new community where all are ministers of mercy in Christ's name. When that ministry fails in the church its witness to the world is jeopardized.

The vivid reality of the Christian *hope* is equally vital in a world of war, famine, and despair. The church awaits not the grinding of cosmic process but the coming of the risen Lord who already fills all things with his power and will subdue all things to himself. The cosmic power and purpose of the Lord of glory frees the Christian to serve God in this groaning creation, even as he tastes in the Spirit the powers of the age to come. The redeemer is the Creator, the Lord, the Spirit.

The life of the Spirit is the fountain of joy for the church's ministry in a suffering world. The comfort and encouragement, the tenderness and power, the burden-bearing sharing of the Spirit, these are the spiritual gifts that ministry to suffering requires.

The true comprehensiveness of salvation is the fullness of the Spirit's work in the church by which the saints are rooted in the love of Christ and grow to minister in his name, working that which is good "unto all men, and especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

As the opportunity is given in our time of famine and need, the church must show the compassion of Christ to the world. The genuineness of deeds as well as words, of sacrifice to care for the forgotten will manifest the reality of the love of Christ. A renewed diaconate must manifest continuous rather than sporadic concern; the fellowship of the ministry of the Word and of tables reflects the permanent structure of office in Christ's Church. As the risen Lord bears in his body the marks of his sufferings, so must the Church, his body, bear the marks of Jesus (Gal. 6:17) not only by suffering in his name, but by ministering in his compassion to an afflicted and guilty world.

## MAN'S DILEMMA OF SIN AND SUFFERING

*Chairman: D. Pantupong*

*Secretary: D. Penney*

### 1. Major points of agreement

a. The depth and meaning of human suffering can be understood only in terms of man's relation to the living God. The doom and dread of suffering in God's wrath is inescapable and final. Salvation from suffering is God's promise and work, wrought through Christ's atonement. Fellowship with God in Christ transforms suffering both in its experience and its fruit.

b. The many aspects of suffering are probed in the Bible with profound realism. In prayers of anguish and in meditations of reflection, the experience of suffering is brought before God. Yet all of these aspects are taken up in the unity of God's revelation and the climax of his work of redemption in Christ. The Bible presents the origin of sin and suffering in man's first disobedience. God's initiative in grace promises salvation through suffering (Gen. 3:15). Suffering is related to the divine discipline of the covenant people as well as to the covenant curse. The suffering of the righteous is a growing theme, climaxing in the redemptive suffering of the Servant of the Lord and the promise of a new order without suffering and sin.

c. Sin must be defined in terms of the right relation to God that it rejects and perverts. Sin is alienation from God, rebellion against him, and the corruption of all of his good gifts. The sinner is in bondage not only to his own error, illusion, and idolatry, but to the powers of darkness. Suffering may be pathetic, but sin is heinous; guilty and damnable. The folly and absurdity of sin can never conceal its guilt.

No part of man's nature escapes the taint of sin or stands outside the dynamic of sin's direction against God. Only salvation by God's grace can provide the new birth of the Spirit and the total reversal of direction that breaks the dominion of sin in the heart of man.

e. No part of mankind escapes the condemnation of God's righteousness. All are guilty, deserving God's wrath; the death penalty is pronounced against all. They are guilty in Adam's first transgression; they participate in progressive abandonment of God, and are abandoned by God in judgment.

f. Religious and cultural achievements reflect to some degree not only that man is made in God's image, but also that God's grace restrains human corruption. But the religion and culture of fallen man do not escape from the apostate direction of his rebellious heart. Indeed, man's spiritual iniquity gives the deepest expression to his sin. Man's religions, in distinction from the true worship of the living God, seek to do away with God, not to seek his face.

g. Salvation is not only God's gift, but God's own presence and fellowship. It is the bond that joins the redeemed to the Redeemer. Neither a "theology of liberation" nor a "theology of creation" can be isolated from the theocentric core of biblical salvation. God's delivering, healing, leading, proving, chastening, and blessing are

all part of the salvation by which he brings men to himself.

h. God's salvation is accomplished by his coming in Jesus Christ, who is God the Son born as a true man of the Virgin Mary. His coming is the fulfillment of his promised salvation. Because Christ is Lord his power and presence accomplish the salvation of God's kingdom decisively in his first coming, even though he will come again to bring the final fullness of his kingdom. Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

i. The "gathering" of Christ's saving rule assembles the Church as the new mankind in Christ. Christ calls his Church to the ministry of worship, edification, and witness in the power of the Holy Spirit. But while the Church has a heavenly life, live: by the heavenly law of love, and is separated from the world to holiness, it is not now taken from the world, but called to follow Christ in suffering now and in glory hereafter.

j. Christ's own work defines the nature and the program of his kingdom of salvation:

- (i) His refusal of political Messiahship
- (ii) His teaching of kingdom righteousness
- (iii) His claim to Lordship in all his ministry
- (iv) His granting of kingdom blessing and withholding judgment
- (v) His sufferings and glory
- (vi) His *parousia*

k. The Gospel of Christ therefore presents both the present and the future of salvation as Christ's own work. Suffering now has an eschatological setting for Christ's Church. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

l. Salvation in Christ is comprehensive and unitary. It includes his work as the last Adam in fulfilling man's original calling, his death for sinners as the Lamb of God who gives his life a ransom for many, his coming again as the judge to bring perfect and eternal justice. The church is now called to have fellowship with Christ in suffering; it is not now called to vindicative retribution. The discipline of the church is spiritual, not physical; the church judges those within, not those without. In the last day only will the church share in Christ's judgment.

m. Christ's triumph is total, his salvation will provide a new heaven and earth; even now he has all authority in heaven and in earth. Christ's authority sets his people free to fulfill his calling in the world, yet his calling includes the limitations imposed by his present purpose of withholding final judgment while the Gospel is preached to the nations.

n. Christ's calling to his Church is to take up the cross to follow him. By suffering his Church is proved and disciplined, in suffering the Church bears witness to the suffering servant Christ; above all, in suffering the Church has deepened fellowship with Christ and with fellow Christians. Joy in suffering marks the obedience of Christ's Church until he comes. God's suffering servants glorify him as all men see their patient confidence as they affirm God's loving faithfulness in every circumstance. God uses tribulation to disciple his people, consuming the dross in the hearts of believers.

o. The power of the Gospel lies in the "foolishness" of the Cross

of Christ, where misery of man's sin and majesty of God's love are revealed. In man's weakness, God's grace and power are manifested.

## 2. Implications for evangelism: man's dilemma of sin and suffering

a. The Gospel of Christ crucified must remain central for evangelism.

(i) The Cross reveals the righteousness of God's judgment against sin.

(ii) The Cross reveals the mystery of God's love in Christ's substitutionary atonement for sin.

(iii) The Cross reveals the triumph of Christ over sin, death, and the powers of darkness.

(iv) The Cross puts to shame the wisdom of men as the sublime "foolishness" of God.

(v) The Cross puts to shame the power of men by the victorious "weakness" of God.

b. Evangelism proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom, a message centered in Christ the King: his present exaltation and Lordship and his future subjecting of all things to himself. This message requires total obedience to Christ in all of life, but obedience to the specific program and will of Christ in the pattern of his own ministry: sufferings and glory. The Gospel cannot promise deliverance from present suffering because of Christ's present victory. Rather it is through suffering that we are called to inherit the kingdom (I Thess. 3:3, 4).

c. The Gospel must be presented boldly in its condemnation of sin and in its call to repentance and conversion. The pattern of the Gospel does not require an inflexible ordering of the message (as though the promise of the Gospel could never precede the Gospel's condemnation of sin), but we are charged with presenting to men the whole Gospel. To understand the grace of God, men must perceive the meaning of the righteous wrath of God.

d. The fearful bondage of men to sin and death requires us to proclaim and trust in God alone as Savior. Trust in the power of God's Spirit and God's Word are indispensable in faithful evangelism.

e. The comprehensiveness of salvation in Christ is not a composite of personal deliverance from the guilt and power of sin and the amelioration of social conditions (or the re-ordering of social structures). It is rather the fullness of God's presence in salvation among his people. The new structure of corporate life in Christ is found among the people of God. Christ said, "I will build my church." The biblical doctrine of the Church must be given its rightful place in the theology and program of evangelism.

f. Fellowship in suffering must include a return to biblical principles of stewardship on the part of those who need to give and those who need to receive.

g. The blessed hope of Christ's return forms a most significant part of the Gospel message in contrast to the illusory promises of humanistic and political utopias.

### Summary of further discussion

Question: Modern evangelism seems more suffering conscious than

sin conscious. How can we turn this suffering consciousness to the main question, sin? Isn't social action bypassing the main issue?

*Conclusion:* Natural man sees suffering as the problem and wants to do away with it. He may either accuse God of being unjust or claim that suffering shows that no loving God exists. However, God wants man to stop his rebelling, which is the root cause of the suffering. A doctor does not treat only the symptoms; he must also attack the disease. But serious symptoms must also be treated.

*Question:* Just what is the diaconal ministry of the Church?

*Conclusion:* It is the Church showing forth Christ's love among the brethren within and Christ's mercy to all men outside the Church. This must be given an important place. The Christian community has not adequately felt the need to be involved.

*Question:* How does this diaconal ministry relate to evangelism?

*Conclusion:* It is a powerful witness to Christ's presence in his Church when men see *truth* being practiced in and from the Christian community.

*Question:* Do people listen more to the Gospel when they have experienced the diaconal ministry toward themselves?

*Conclusion:* Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

*Question:* Then, why help them?

*Conclusion:* We extend them Christ's mercy for Christ's sake, "We love because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). There should be an evangelistic effect, but not merely an evangelistic purpose. People will know the difference as to whether we have sincerely acted in love for Christ and for them, or merely to gain opportunity to preach to them. Our first priority and act should be to pray for those who are suffering; but we must not stop there. We must then share in their suffering. This may then give opportunity to share our experience of Christ — how he has helped us in our need. The interest we show in them must be real in relation to their felt need. A starving person may need bread in order to be able to listen to the Gospel.

*Question:* But, if we could relieve all hunger, for example, would there not still be a deeper suffering? Many of those who have the most that this world can offer are among the most desperate and frustrated.

*Conclusion:* We must keep our main aim on treating the real problem: man's sin, which can only be treated by the full communication of the Gospel of Christ. But at the same time, we must do what we can for the symptoms of suffering. Perhaps the simplest statement of this combination is, "Give a cup of cold water in the name of Christ." The water represents physical ministry to a real need: physical thirst, while the "name of Christ" represents all that Jesus Christ is — the God-man who gave himself for our spiritual need, to free us from the sin that is at the root of mankind's problem; the sin that is the root cause of all suffering, and also the cause in every man's personal frustration, spiritual suffering and separation from God.

## JESUS CHRIST, THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD: THE RELATIONSHIP OF HIS DEITY AND HUMANITY WITH REFERENCE TO EVANGELISM

Roger Nicole

*Dr. Nicole, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, USA, is Professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.*

It is clear beyond challenge that the New Testament identifies the hope of salvation for any human being with the name of Jesus Christ. Peter the Apostle said, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Paul said, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." As the Scripture says, "He who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:9-15).

John said "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (I John 5:11, 12). And again, "Whoever puts his faith in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see that life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6). "No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27).

These are only some representative verses from some of the most highly accredited teachers in the New Testament. They could be supplemented by scores of other passages to the same effect as well as by the sense of intense urgency which prompted Jesus Christ to accomplish his work on earth and the apostles to proclaim the salvation which only he could secure for fallen man. In fact, the centrality of Christ for salvation is not found in the New Testament alone, but it is envisioned in prophetic perspective in the Old Testament, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).