

THE CHRISTIAN MANDATE FOR HOLINESS

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The following four talks were delivered in substance on two different occasions in England and Romania, October 1989. They are designed together. They illustrate the rich integration which is necessary for the display of Christian holiness.

The call that God issues to us as individuals to be his people, to become fulfilled and whole, is not thereby privatistic. It is related to our essential human identity. However, as such it is also related to community or social identity. The first two talks are designed to have you ask the question about what God is doing in your life. The last two talks will help you to wrestle with the question of what God is doing in the world. Related to the last question is one which asks you to ask yourself what you are doing to promote or hinder that work by the way in which you are living your private life.

1. PERSONAL HOLINESS: A LESSON FROM MOSES AT THE MOUNT

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

2. SOCIAL SANCTIFICATION: A LESSON FROM OLD ISRAEL FOR NEW ISRAEL

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you whenever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

3. HOLINESS AND SOCIETY: THE PRECONDITIONS FOR NATIONAL REVIVAL

"Who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No-one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." (I John 3:4-6)

4. SOCIETY, RELIGION, AND NATIONAL RESTORATION

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

PERSONAL HOLINESS: A LESSON FROM MOSES AT THE MOUNT

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

- I. Degrees of Intimacy with God (Exodus 19)
 - II. What Moses learned: The Nature of Friendship (Exodus 21, 33)
 - III. The Covenant: The Structure of God's Friendship (Genesis 15)
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This talk focuses upon what we can learn from the life of Moses about the holiness of God. The general theme has been suggested to me by others. The point I would like us to see is that there is something to the relationship between humanity and God that is analogous to the idea of human friendship. However, to say this assumes many things. For example, it assumes an understanding of God, human nature, and friendship as sketched in the Bible. Each of these three points will be assumed in this talk.

One additional point that must be stressed before we proceed too far in looking at the life of Moses is that he was a man like ourselves. He was no different. This is a point that can be made about many of the patriarchs in the Bible (cf. James 5:17). Moses was a flawed "image" of God, no better nor worse than ourselves. All of the human potentiality that is in us was in him. All of the devastation of sin that is in us was also in him. Moses was a murderer (Exodus 2:12), and sin continued to characterize his life (Numbers 20:11-12) -- and so too the other patriarchs of faith: Abraham was a liar, Rebekah and Jacob dishonest, and David an adulterer. This is a pattern that we continue to find repeated in the pages of the New Testament as well.

The point, of course, is not to leave any of the above in their sin. What characterized these paragons of faith (Hebrews 11:1-40) was that they did not hide their sin. They confessed it and permitted God to work in their lives. They did not rebel against God's discipline and so found their way to a deeper trust in God and measure of restoration into the "images" of God they were meant to be.

With these initial remarks in mind we may proceed to a consideration of the following three points.

- I. Degrees of Intimacy with God (Exodus 19)

When we talk about degrees of intimacy with God we are thinking about a subject that pertains to those who are already within the circle of faith, who already know something of the nature of the reality of God and have been called by him to be in relation to him. Having said this, the story of Israel encamped beneath Mount Sinai appears to suggest that

there are different degrees which might characterize our relationship with God. The different ways in which the Israelites were allowed to approach God suggest four different degrees of intimacy with him (Exodus 19:11-12):

- A) First, consider all Israel (Exodus 20:18-21).
- B) Second, consider Moses and the elders (Exodus 24:9-11).
- C) Third, consider Moses and Joshua (Exodus 24:12-14).
- D) Fourth, consider Moses alone (Exodus 24:15-18).

Question One:

Study each of the texts above until you understand some of the spiritual principles involved. Other texts may suggest themselves to you as well. Do similar degrees of intimacy appear around Jesus in the New Testament? Ask yourself, "In what circle of intimacy do I find myself?" Are you satisfied with this?

II. What Moses learned: The Nature of Friendship (Exodus 24, 33)

A) First, Moses learned what it meant to have God as a friend (Exodus 33:11). This is an incredible idea when we consider the nature of the one with whom we (in this case Moses) are called to enter into relationship. Speaking "face to face" with God would appear to imply that Moses hid nothing from God. Indeed, it is difficult to maintain friendship with someone from whom we hide things. Such hiding produces limits to friendship.

B) Second, the person of God was greater than the friendship shared with Moses. This is implied in Exodus 33:23 where we read that from another perspective it might be said that Moses saw the back of God, not his face. Putting together what we read in Exodus 33:11 and 23, we are led to the suggestion that God is always greater than his revelation to us. This does not imply deceptiveness, but he is always greater than ourselves and our conceptions of him. To some extent this might be said of any friend who always remains an "other" to us. In this mystery we guard the integrity of the "other" and do not presume upon friendship. In Exodus 33 we guard the integrity of God.

C) The integrity of friendship is guarded when we do not use it as a means to advance ourselves. This is even more important when we think of the idea of friendship with God. Many of us are aware of ways in which we, or others, have "used" our belief in God to advance our own interests. This is always destructive of true friendship. So too, Moses was tested in his friendship with God. In his displeasure with Israel, God says to Moses that He will make of Moses a great nation (Exodus 32:9-10). But Moses prayed for Israel. He even prays for their salvation to the exclusion of his (Exodus 32:32), reminding us of Paul's prayer for Israel (Ro 10:1).

In this, Moses proved the integrity of his friendship with God.

D) An additional point that merits mention is that friendship makes us shine. We know what this is like when we are with those people whom we count as our friends. How much more is this the case with God. Consider the way in which Moses was un-selfconsciously affected by his friendship with God. We read that "his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Exodus 34:29).

Question Two:

Do I consider God a friend, distant acquaintance, or enemy? What am I hiding in my life in order, mistakenly, to protect myself? Do I understand how destructive this is to developing intimacy with God?

III. The Covenant: The Structure of God's Friendship (Genesis 15)

A) God's covenant with Abraham is laid down in Genesis 15. It is established by God, grounded in his promise and in the integrity of his person (I Chron. 16:7-36; Psalm 105).

B) The friendship calls for our obedience, but is not dependent upon it (Isaiah 24:5; 54:10; Hosea 1-14).

C) This covenant is deepened in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:24; 13:20). He is both the proper heir of God's promises and means by which they are conveyed fully to us.

Question Three:

What marks of identity does God give us by virtue of our entering into his covenantal friendship? What are the consequences when we abuse or adulterate this friendship? In what way does Jesus draw us into the covenant through his identification with us?

We might ask by way of conclusion: "What does it take for us to enter into friendship with God?" Is this something we desire? Do we understand it to be a good, indeed the highest good for our life?

SOCIAL SANCTIFICATION: A LESSON FROM OLD ISRAEL FOR NEW ISRAEL

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"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

- I. Claiming the Territory (Joshua)
- II. How to Read History (I Corinthians 10)
- III. Human Nature -- The Nature of Sin
- IV. The Seven Deadly Sins (Proverbs)
- V. The Lesson

I. Claiming the Territory (Joshua)

A) The Importance of Remembering History

This is central to the consciousness of Israel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Understanding the history of Israel, e.g., as we find it recorded in the book of Joshua, is valuable as we consider the nature of the fulfillment of the promise given to Moses in Exodus 23.

As you begin to read the book of Joshua you will note that it begins with Joshua (1:1), the one who would not leave the tent, but stayed behind after Moses finished his prayers in order to continue to seek the Lord (Exodus 33:11).

B) Reading the Book of Joshua

Be sure to understand the structure of the book of Joshua. It will become important to us as we look for the spiritual significance of Israel's history:

- I. God's command to take the land (1:1-18)
- II. Crossing the Jordan
 - Spying out the Land (2)
 - Crossing the Jordan (3)
 - The Monument to the Event (4)
 - Circumcision at Gilgal (5:2-8)
 - Celebration of the Passover (5:10-12)
- III. The Fall of Jericho (5:13-6:27)
- IV. The Battle of Ai (7:1-8:29)
- V. Israel at Ebal and Gerizim (8:30-35)
- VI. The Conquest of the Land (9-12)

- VII. The Division of the Land and Further Work Outlined (13-22)
- VIII. Farewell Address and Death of Joshua (23-24)
(The Covenant Renewed at Shechem, 24:1-27)

Question One:

Be sure that you understand the history of Israel and way in which it is structured in Joshua. Both facets of the book become important in the history of the church's understanding of the spiritual significance of Israel and way in which Israel's history foreshadows principles of true spirituality.

II. How to Read History

A) The meaning of history

1) Jesus gives us some indication as to how to read history through his own self understanding (Matt 16:13-17:13) as well as through his interpretation of the past as reflected in the gospel writers.

2) Paul offers insight into how to think about history as well in such texts as Galatians 4:21-31 and I Corinthians 10:1-13. The latter text is particularly fruitful for our purposes.

B) The application of the text

1) Are we willing, or able, simply to leave the history of Israel as that, i.e., merely events that have happened in the past? Or, is there meaning in Israel's experience that might serve as a guide for our lives today? The implication found in Jesus and Paul is that all that happened to Israel in the past serves as a guide for us today.

2) In what way does the history of Israel, the gospel of Jesus Christ and experience of the first Christians, i.e., the Bible, offer guidance for our lives today?

a) Our understanding of Jesus finds final religious authority in him. He is confessed to be both man, like us and approachable, yet as God he is the final truth and one to whom all things must tend. As both God and man he intercedes for us and leads us to maturity (Hebrews 4:14-16).

b) The history of Israel and experience of the first Christians shape our understanding of the nature of the life he calls us to live (Hebrews 11-12).

B) How to Read the Text

Throughout the history of the church Christians have turned to the history recorded in the Bible in order to find guidance for life. The Bible has provided a symbolic representation, or allegory, of the Christian life. Or, because of the integrity of the recorded events in its books, has been referred to as a typology, i.e., as presenting through persons, cases, and models the manner by which the Christian is to live.

Question Two:

In what ways do you understand the events recorded in the book of Joshua as providing guidance for you as an individual? Are the events found therein also to guide the community of Christians, i.e., the church? Christian societies?

C) Reading the Book of Joshua

In the earliest commentaries written by churchmen (e.g., Jerome) on how to read the book of Joshua, the book was seen to illustrate the nature of the Christian life in the following way.

I. God's command to take the land (1:1-18)

This is the call to salvation.

II. Crossing the Jordan

Spying out the Land (2)

Crossing the Jordan (3)

This is the acceptance of God's grace.

The Monument to the Event (4)

Circumcision at Gilgal (5:2-8)

This is our baptism.

Celebration of the Passover (5:10-12)

This is the Lord's Supper, or eucharist.

III. The Fall of Jericho (5:13-6:27)

This is our first victory in the life of faith. The history of Israel in claiming the Promised Land is an example of the Christian's growing mastery over sin and resulting sanctification.

IV. The Battle of Ai (7:1-8:29)

This is an example of the defeat and failure which comes when we yield to sin or hide from the truth.

V. Israel at Ebal and Gerizim (8:30-35)

Confession, forgiveness, and reaffirmation bring revival and restoration. With such comes the strength for further conquests in the life of faith.

- VI. The Conquest of the Land (9-12)
- VII. The Division of the Land and Further Work Outlined (13-22)
- VIII. Farewell Address and Death of Joshua (23-24)
(The Covenant Renewed at Shechem, 24:1-27)

This reminds us of the need for times of reaffirmation and "re-visioning."

III. Human Nature -- The Nature of Sin

As we consider the history and interpretation that we have considered, the necessity of restoration and devastation of sin become meaningful in relation to our understanding of essential humanness and the nature of fulfillment or wholeness.

A) Human Nature in Classical Thinking

In much of the classical world there were understood to be four components of human nature which set humankind off from the animal world: 1) reason, 2) family ties, 3) the search after truth, and 4) moral sensibility. To each of these qualities was attached a virtue (or "strength") which, it was felt, would bring fulfillment in the particular domain under consideration. So, wisdom fulfilled the human quality of reason, justice that of family ties, courage or fortitude that of the search after truth, and self-discipline brought to fulfillment moral sensibility.

The virtuous, or strong and "whole" person exhibited qualities of wisdom, justice, courage, and self-control.

B) The Christian Contribution to Ideas of Human Nature

Based upon the creation narrative, Jews and Christians argued that man was made in the "image of God" (1:26; 2:23-24). Ideas about what this might mean have varied in history. However, as we think of the opening two chapters in Genesis it might be argued that as God was conceived as creator (1:1), the one who blesses his creation (1:4), and as the one who names it (1:5), so man also co-creates, blesses, and names things.

C) The Devestation of Sin

However, from Genesis 3 on we note that man may either create or destroy, he might bless or curse, and he might name accurately or mis-name, distort and lie. Having said this, we begin to understand the way in which sin distorts the ideal of human nature. Furthermore, this idea might even be extended to classical

understandings of man so enabling us to understand what is at work in our lives making us less wise, just, courageous, and disciplined that we might otherwise wish. In other words, sin works as an "acid" in our life destroying the possibility of fulfillment and wholeness.

D) The Person of Jesus as the Image of God

In the New Testament Paul argues that Jesus is "the image and glory of God" (I Corinthians 11:7; cf. Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). He is the only perfect such image. Through sin we have each become fractured images. However, he is the model of what we are to be as we are restored through him (Colossians 1:15-20). We might say that through faith, as we rely upon his grace (James 1:5-8, 16-18) he enables us to become the image of God, or whole person, that we were meant to be. He is the "author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Question Three:

As we think about the question of human fulfillment today, we might reflect on the following:

- 1) What are essential human qualities that mark me and the rest of humanity, setting us off from the rest of the created or material order?
- 2) How am I going about trying to fulfill these "marks" of my humanity?
- 3) In what ways am I finding myself frustrated in my attempts to find this fulfillment?
- 4) In what ways do I rely upon the grace of Christ to bring me the fulfillment that I require?

IV. The Seven Deadly Sins (Proverbs)

In the history of Christian reflection upon the devastation of sin many commentators on the Bible have been drawn to the following list of seven sins. There are other ways to think about the universal phenomenon of sin and other lists that could be drawn up.

Consider the following list in the table found below. Several traditional texts associated with these sins have been given next to the sin in question. You may wish to think of other texts. Complete the table by filling in the blank spaces with individuals, either from the Bible or general world history, who have been caught up in one of the particular sins given. Then see if you can think of the social effects of that sin and the nature of what was lost that might have been.

! Sin	! Script.	! Indivi.	! Social	! What was lost	!
! Pride	! Prov. 8:13	!	!	!	!
! Envy	! Prov. 24:19	!	!	!	!
! Anger	! Prov. 15:1	!	!	!	!
! Sloth/ ! Despair	! Prov. 26:15	!	!	!	!
! Avarice/ ! Greed	! Prov. 27:4	!	!	!	!
! Gluttony	! Prov. 23:2	!	!	!	!
! Lust	! Prov. 6:25	!	!	!	!

Question Four:

In working through the above exercise you should begin to see something of the "acidic" effect of sin upon individual and corporate life. Sin destroys or individual and social attempts at wholeness and well being.

V. The Lesson

There are many points that might developed in relation to the text of Joshua and discussion of human nature and fulfillment outlined above. Consider the following three points as we conclude your reflections on "Social Sanctification":

1) History has always been important to the Christian. Although debate continues on whether it is possible to develop a "science" of history or not, the Bible charges us to remember history (e.g., Deut. 6:1-9). There is something very "human" to reflecting upon and writing history. It draws upon the objectivity and subjectivity that are central to human life and well being.

2) The lesson of Joshua calls us to the centrality of grace for human fulfillment. Assuming the moral message of the text, we are drawn in the book of James (1:5-8, 16-18) to the grace (faith, hope and love), received through faith in Christ, required to defeat the ravages of sin and bring a measure of human fulfillment in this life.

3) The lesson implied in Joshua (7:1-8:29) at Ai, and stated explicitly in James, is that there is no victory in the Christian life apart from honesty and confession of sin. When disciplined by the Lord for sin, we may either rebel and develop resentment or

yield to the discipline of the Lord and grow (Hebrews 12:4-24).

It is only as we confess and yield that we develop the kind of nature required for God to call us his friends (James 2:23-24). Our Lord reminds us of this in the words that have been recorded: "You are my friends if you do what I command (John 15:14).

Question Five:

Apply the three points raised above to your own life and experience. Consider how the last one ties in with what we learned about friendship with God in our first talk (cf. Exodus 33:11) .

HOLINESS AND SOCIETY
THE PRECONDITIONS FOR NATIONAL REVIVAL

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"Who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No-one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." (I John 3:4-6)

- I. Four Theological Preconditions for Revival
- II. Social Structures and Renewal in Society
- III. Where Did the Power Go?
- IV. The Heart of History...Where is Your Heart?

I. Four Theological Preconditions for Revival

When we think of Christian revival we identify with a rhythm in history that we discerned in the book of Joshua as Israel reaffirmed the nature of God's covenant after the sin of Ai (8:30-35). Such was again affirmed at Shechem (24:1-27) and elsewhere in the Bible in such places as II Chronicles 15-21. We might continue by tracing revivals of the true worship of God down through the Middle Ages and early modern period into our own day.

In each of these revivals there has been a fresh recognition of the holiness of God. Thus far we have considered the holiness of God, the friendship he seeks to have with us and the levels of intimacy permitted the Christian. This may be a topic about which you will want to spend more time thinking.

We have gone on to consider the question of social sanctification. As we have done so we have come to recognize something of the significance of sin and ways in which it destroys our personality and social integrity. Sin always "short circuits" the work of God in our lives as individuals and what God seeks to do in the world. Of course, this is said in recognition of the fact that God continually works for good in the lives of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

When we consider what the preconditions for revival might be I would like to turn our attention to four considerations. I have been guided in this reflection both by Scripture as well as by the work of Richard Lovelace who writes about revival in Renewal as a Way of Life as well as earlier books. His thoughts are based upon the work of the American theologian of revival, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), whose preaching in the (then) colony of Massachusetts helped to stimulate the Great Awakening of Christianity in North America. The following four considerations present themselves:

1. A recognition of the holiness of God

2. An appreciation of the nature of our sin
3. An understanding of the structure of his love
4. A view toward the goal of his kingdom

In our first two talks we have considered the first two of the above points already. Much more might be said. However, if you are not sure of these things, return to the notes of the previous talks and think further about the ideas and texts in the Bible to which those notes take us. Here we shall turn to the last two of the four points raised above and concentrate on the third.

A) An Understanding of the Structure of God's Love.

This understanding is kindled by an inner vision of the heart stimulated by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:17-20). The prayer is that all will experience this enlivening. Two of the theologians who excel in their writing about this experience are Augustine (354-430) and Edwards. Both focus upon the nature of love as the primary motivating force. Augustine draws this idea out in his Confessions (XIII.9):

...love is the weight by which I act. To whatever place I go, I am drawn to it by love. By your Gift, the Holy Ghost, we are set aflame and borne aloft, and the fire within us carries us upward. Our hearts are set on an upward journey, as we sing the song of ascents [Pslams 120-134]. It is your fire, your good fire, that sets us aflame and carries us upward. For our journey leads us upward to the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem;... There, if our will is good, you will find room for us, so that we shall wish for nothing else but to remain in your house for ever.

In his book, On Christian Doctrine, Augustine goes on to discuss the nature of signs and things, how the only real thing is God himself. Every other "thing" given to us in life is but a "sign" to lead us to God, the only final reality and resting place. Becoming satisfied with the "signs" is to become satisfied with something that is less than God, or idolatry.

The four dimensions of God's love might be said to be:

1. Justification
2. Sanctification
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Renewed Confidence

Each of these four ideas have been present in every age of the church. However, in different periods of history Christians have been drawn to emphasize one or the other of them. For example:

1. Justification: Martin Luther is a theologian whose work emphasized the gratuitous mercy of God at a time when it appeared such might be lost in the face of attempts to win salvation through human effort. Before all such efforts Luther simply taught that we are accepted. This is a word that needs to be heard again in our day today (cf. Romans 3:22-26; 5:1-5; and Gal. 5:1). The result of Luther's emphasis upon justification was revival, even reformation.

in his day.

2. Sanctification: John Calvin is one of the theologians whose work draws us directly to the question of sanctification. Calvin wrote at a time when the question of the form of the Christian life was directly at issue. According to Calvin, the law that we perceive in nature (not dissimilar to the law that we find in the Bible) is both the foundation of a godly social order and, through our inability to live by it, should drive us to the grace of God in Christ (Luther's point). However, the law that we discern in the Bible is also the form of God's love, i.e., by living through the power of the Holy Spirit we find in the law how God would have us become whole people, or sanctified (cf. Galatians 5:13). As such, we are freed from bondage to sin. The result of Calvin's emphasis was to lead to a Reformed Christian movement that remade individuals, churches and societies.

3. The Holy Spirit: John Wesley was one of the figures in the history of the church who has drawn Christians to the empowerment that comes as we recognize and accept the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Writing in a day of religious formalism and hypocrisy his work helped to revitalize dying churches and a cynical society. Such texts as John 14-16 and Acts 2 remind the Christian that the Spirit is alive and present in the world today. Wesley's work helped to stimulate a new worldwide evangelistic thrust and revival in areas where the call of the gospel was falling on deaf ears.

4. Authority: Perhaps this is a word that the church needs to hear today. Based upon the ideas of acceptance, freedom, and empowerment through the Spirit, the Christian can be in command of his life and in society. However, when not properly understood this idea is open to abuse and misinterpretation. Such has frequently happened in history.

Having added the above caution, the following must be noted:

a) The Bible promises the wisdom that we need to lead our lives (James 1:5; cf. Matt. 7:7-12). It would appear to limit God were we to say that such does not also extend to ways in which we lead our lives in society. This calls for a deep and continuing study of the Bible to see all that God intends for us.

b) Furthermore, as the church Christians constitute the body of Christ in the world (Ephesians 1:23). As such, we act rightly when guided by our head, Christ Jesus. However, we also need to remember that we should not be surprised if we experience what he in his body experienced during his days on earth (I Peter 2:21; 4:12).

c) The life of Christ gives us guidance into the manner of Christian control. Perhaps the best set of events to focus on here is the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:1-11). Here Jesus was challenged to use his power to make stones into bread, to cast himself off the temple so that the angels would care for

him, and to take control of the nations. However, in refusing such temptations and in following the way of the cross he became bread for us, the perfect witness to God's truth, and receives final dominion through the last judgment (cf. Hebrews 4:14; Revelation 1:5). Or, put differently, Jesus became our High Priest, the perfect prophet and king. By analogy, so might we as we learn to intercede for others, speak truly and rule through service (remember John 13:1-17). In this way the Christian learns the nature of true power and authority.

B) A View Toward the Goal of His Kingdom

Only as the Christian is in Christ and keeps as his goal the kingdom of God can he or she maintain a right sense of authority as outlined above. There is much that might be said about the nature of God's kingdom. The following is meant only to be suggestive:

1) The nature of the kingdom is mystically summarized in the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:38-40), a summary of much of Old Testament command and precept (Deut. 6:4-5 and Lev. 19:18).

2) The writings of Israel's prophets and theme of her history further sketch the nature of this kingdom. It is one to which she is called by God and cannot construct by herself (cf. Genesis 11,12). The visions of Isaiah (e.g., 9:6-7), Daniel (e.g., 7:14,27), and other prophets offer guidance in thinking.

3) Imagery in the New Testament compounds what we can find in the Old Testament. However, the vision of the kingdom is deepened and seen to begin in the human heart through the teachings of Jesus. As we have come to understand something of the nature of sin, this is something that we can now appreciate.

4) Further speculation throughout the history of the church has worked with the lines and shadows sketched above in an effort to give the kingdom greater specificity. Some of the ways in which this has been done have been described as "a-millennial", "post-millennial", and "pre-millennial" as Christian thinkers have sought to put history as we perceive it together with the visions of the prophets and writers of the Bible. Different visions of the precise nature of the coming of the kingdom have sustained many of the revivals in the history of the church.

Question One:

As you ponder the nature of the structure of God's love, what do you see as the dimension of that love which needs to be heard most by yourself and the community of which you are a part?

II. Social Structures and Renewal in Society

A) Social Structures

1) Primacy of the Holy Spirit

Even before we think about the nature of social structures in a society and ways in which such might promote or impede the proclamation of the gospel, we must remind ourselves that the work of evangelization and revival is always first and foremost the work of the Spirit of God.

a) The promised gift: Jesus promised the sending of the Holy Spirit (John 14-17). The Spirit would empower believers to work as the body of Christ in the world.

b) The gift received: The reception of the Spirit by believers is recorded in Acts 2. We see many examples of the work of the Spirit in the book of Acts, for example note the incident in Acts 3. The Holy Spirit came in the first generation of the church and is available to every believer. The "Age of the Spirit" is not some era that is beginning to dawn or will dawn in the future. The Bible teaches that after this age (the era of the NT) will come judgment.

c) The gift open to mis-use: As early in the recorded history of the church as Acts 8:9-25 (the example of Simon Magus) we find those who desire to use the power of the Holy Spirit for their own ends. Reasons of envy (Simon Magus), jealousy and lust (Judas?), and resentment (Gehazi, the servant of Elisha) often prompt one to use religion and religious language for one's own ends.

d) The extent of the gift: Having noted several concerns above, we must come back to our first point, that revival comes at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Spirit in power is related to our prayers and God's will (Ephesians 1:17-23). The extent of the Spirit's power is as vast as the power that raised Jesus from the dead.

2) Unrest in Society: The work of religious anthropologists and sociologists in this century has helped us to see that the likelihood of revival or openness to new world views is greater among a people in times of turbulence and social transition. This should not surprise the Christian who knows that his or her own openness to God came (or comes) at times of individual turbulence. As you look at all that is going on in our world today we should be aware that times are "ripe" for evangelization and revival.

3) Pattern of Relationship Between Christianity and Society: whether the gospel can be heard in a society will depend a great deal on the patterns of relationship that have existed between the church and the society, i.e., on the society's perception of Christianity. The nature of this relationship can best be thought of in relation to communication theory.

A question that must be asked in this context is whether the society is faced with the need of evangelization or revival. In

theory, in any society where the church has already been planted it is probably best to think of revival rather than evangelization. Efforts directed toward revival can frequently take advantage of a country's heritage and sense of self-identity. Such will promote the work of revival.

4) The Structures for Dissemination

- a) historical perception of Christianity
- b) the condition of the churches
- c) access to social structures
- d) the nature of the media

B) Religious (Christian) Revival in History

1) The model of II Chronicles 15-21

2) Examples (These examples are taken up in detail in the Church History Workbook being prepared for Theological Education by Extension)

- a) The Great Awakening in North America
- b) The Evangelical Revival in Great Britain
- c) The Welsh Revival
- d) Current Interest in Revival in North America

Question Two:

As you wrestle with the preconditions for revival cited above, think through the following:

- 1) Read through and study II Chronicles 15-21 in order to see if you can discern the preconditions for revival cited in this talk.
 - 2) Apply what you have read above to a revival of your experience or understanding through reading.
 - 3) Think about your own Christian experience, church and society. In what ways can you promote the work of revival?
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III. Where Did the Power Go?

In other words, why do revivals end? This is an interesting question that, like the question of the beginnings of revival, take us to the interstices of divine will and human effort. But we need not leave the question simply with mystery. There are suggestions given us in Scripture to enable us to at least develop degrees of an answer.

A) Suggestions from Scripture:

You may want to begin your considerations with Scripture. Read about the end of the revival begun under Asa in II Chronicles 21.

Furthermore, think of the list of "Seven Deadly Sins" which we worked out earlier. Note ways in which envy, lust, pride, etc. have distorted and destroyed the work of religious revival.

B) Contemporary Examples

1) Individual-Social integrity: In an article entitled "So Much for Our "Great Awakening," in the fortnightly Christianity Today, Charles Colson writes of attempts at revival in the United States in the 1980's. He notes the failure of this revival because of its promoters failure "to grasp a basic truth: It is impossible to effect genuine political reform through legislation without at the same time reforming individual -- and eventually national -- character." He goes on to compare this failure with successes found in the efforts of nineteenth-century British statesman William Wilberforce in the Evangelical revival within Anglicanism and non-Conformist groups in Wilberforce's day.

2) Theological honesty: In his book Less Than Conquerers: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century, Douglas Frank scores American Evangelicals on their tendency to think of themselves as purer than others when, under God's judgement, they stand in equal need of grace. Such an attitude has undermined their effectiveness and the possibilities of lasting revival in the twentieth century. Frank argues that in losing political control at the turn of the last century, instead of acknowledging their helplessness and need for God's grace, managed to shore up and assert self-confidence. He argues that this occurred in three ways: 1) In the substitution of spiritual power (dispensational pre-millennialism) for lost political power; 2) Through preaching manliness and mastery in a complex society beyond their control; 3) In emphasizing a new legalism in terms of social practices rather than God's grace.

Question Three:

Think about a particular religious revival of which you are aware. What are some of the reasons for its failure? Were the issues particular sins, failure of vision, or other factors?

IV. The Heart of History...Where is Your Heart?

A) Integration Needed: Values (Religion) are central to any social order. As we look around Europe today this should be quite clear. The point is being stressed today with respect to the restiveness visible in Eastern Europe. If Christians do not help to assert the development of and implementation of values in society, other groups will. If we argue that Christian values are intrinsically

accurate because they flow from the nature of the one God, then societies based upon any other values will be inherently less stable. Their foundation will be upon a partial truth, misperception, or outright lie.

B) Revivals and Historical Momentum: In light of the assumptions noted above, if there is inherent within individuals and societies a search for the truth which is at least as strong as our tendency to hide from the truth (Romans 1), then might we see in revivals a kind of key to history? This draws us to the question of what forces fuel history. Both societies of the East and West have grounded much of their understanding of historical momentum in the belief that economic factors are the energy behind historical momentum. While there is obviously truth here, whether or not this is the sole, or even most important motivating force in history is something that is open to debate. Our understanding of the central role of values in shaping a society should keep this debate alive.

C) Your Burden and God's Burden: As you assess your own participation in the church, in the work of revival, and in the use of religious ideas and words it is valuable to ask continually whether they burden you bear is yours or is God's. As you work with this tension think again about the nature of the kingdom of God as it was discussed earlier.

Question Four:

As you conclude your reflections with the question of your heart and the heart of history you might ask yourself what your burden is. Reflect on Jesus's words in Matt. 11:29-30 toward this end.

SOCIETY, RELIGION, AND NATIONAL RESTORATION

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"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."
(Romans 1:20)

- I. Religion (Christianity) and the Need for Integration
- II. Patterns of Religious Behavior
- III. Biblical Patterns of Religion and Power

I. Religion (Christianity) and the Need for Integration

A. The Human Need for Integration

The Bible assumes the individual's need for meaning, or integration. This is what religion is all about. The phenomenon of human religiousness can be discerned at least as early as in the cave paintings of south-west France and northern Spain dating from the end of the last Ice Age between 15,000 and 10,000 years ago. Figurines that may have featured in religious ceremonies have been found throughout Europe from the Paleolithic Era, or around 23,000-25,000 years ago. This is confirmed in Scripture in such places as Paul's letter to the Romans as he argues that God has sown the seed of religion in all men (1:21-22). It is also seen in the continued human tendency toward idolatry whenever the true God is not worshipped (Psalm 14:1; 53:1; Matt. 13:14-15; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 2:12).

Paul reminds us of the essential nature of religion to human identity in his letters to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. This relationship is so assumed throughout the historical experience of Israel and so evident to the writers of the New Testament that apart from adhering to the true religion one is said to be living in terms of illusion, delusion, or idolatry. In the church's history of theological reflection this point is clearly raised by such theologians as Augustine in the Patristic period, Calvin in the Reformation, and Barth in the twentieth century.

The derivation of the word "religion" (Latin: religere = to bind...) reminds us of the need we have for integration and of our tendency to continually "put the world together" conceptually in some form. This is "religion" in its most primary sense. Historians like Arnold Toynbee remind us of the centrality of religion to every civilization. Contemporary theologians like Hans Kung argue that religiousness is as

essential to human nature as is sexuality.

B. "Civil" Religion and Society

Societies require meaning, i.e., "binding" ideas at some level to hold their people together. This argument, raised pointedly by Rousseau in the Social Contract (the "Bible" of the Enlightenment), is basic to the meaning of "civil" religion, the set of prevailing opinions in a society.

If societies are always shaped by values that are generated by groups in society, then we will want to know the ways in which values are being shaped in our society. In other words, if Christians are not generating the values of society, one might ask who is. Think how in Paul's experience at Ephesus the worship of Diana (Artemis) shaped the experience of civic life in Ephesus (see Acts 19).

As Christians we are always interested in the extent to which we are being defined by our social context or, contrariwise, the extent to which our understanding of Christianity is defining that context. In the latter sense we might speak of a faith that is "civic-minded," i.e., interested in moving out beyond a private religious experience to interaction with the social, or public, order in which we live.

C. Totalitarianism in the Twentieth Century

With the decline in confidence placed in what might be known through moral philosophy about how one should live in the world, a development that might be traced through the philosophers Kant (1724-1804) to Nietzsche (1844-1900), a moral world emerged in the twentieth century which appeared to imply that each individual should be left free to chart his or her own way. In this atmosphere of moral freedom little could be said by way of criticizing another about their mode of life.

One of the phenomena shaping societies today is the idea of the nation, or nationalism. This was more clearly visible in Europe and North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is still evident in much of the larger world. Nationalism as a movement was built upon theories of historical progress seen in the work of such individuals as Kant, Herder, and Hegel. Following the experience of the French Revolution the movement became popular and pervasive. Through this the nation was seen to be the bearer of all that a people might hope for in life.

Nietzsche had implied that we have now entered an age "beyond good and evil" or, more precisely, where the one with the strongest will might define the values of the community. In fact, such moral definition had always been in operation although ideologically hidden. Following his point, and in light of the emergence of the idea of the nation as defining

the scope of a people's salvation in history, the way was opened for the emergence of strong national leaders in the twentieth century who might define social values and social life. Such is the philosophical and sociological context for modern totalitarianism.

D. The Lack of Satisfaction in Anything but the True Religion

The Christian who understands the lordship of Jesus Christ in individual and historical experience cannot be satisfied with the development outlined above. In fact, if it is true that Christianity is the expression of the true religion, than anything put in its place is an illusory salvation that leads to delusion, or idolatry.

In today's world we continue to see idolatrous structures collapse almost as quickly as they are raised up. Hopes for individual or social fulfillment apart from the true God, or true pattern of religious integration, will always lead to disappointment and destructive patterns of life.

The search for a national leader who both represents and is able to guide the nation is a natural social phenomenon. Even Israel asked God for such a leader, or king. The request was granted Israel, but in a way which makes us pause and reflect on all that might be going on in such a request from a religious perspective (1 Samuel 8:6-22). The implied warning in the text is that a political leader and sense of national identity can, but not necessarily must, replace dependency upon and the worship of God in individual and social experience.

Question One: Assess in your own experience the following:

- 1) Do I find that my life is characterized by a search for coherence?
 - 2) Around what is my life integrated? Is it my work, my family or community, aesthetic experience or some philosophy?
 - 3) Am I able to reflect upon the questions of value for my life or my society? What are some of the ways in which I, or others around me, find value in life?
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II. Patterns of Religious Behavior

One of the questions that presents itself in light of the human need for religion is that of the discernible patterns of religious behavior. Two of the factors that help to shape such behavior from a social and human perspective are alienation and anomie. Of course, many other factors that shape such behavior as well have been identified in this history of Christian reflection. Alienation and anomie are focused upon here because of their prevalence in the modern world.

A. Alienation and Religious Behavior

1) A Definition

Alienation = "The estrangement (development of indifference or hostility with consequent separation or divorcement) of a person or his affections. In a social setting alienation develops out of a perception that the institutions of one's society are foreign, external, or impinging upon and misshaping the self."

2) Alienation as we experience it

Before we can talk about alienation and religious behavior we must first talk about goals and how they are formed. You might want to pause for a moment and ask how do you derive the goals that you find in your life (or wish you might find there!).

The goals that we have as individuals, or societies, are generally derived from such value-generating institutions as churches, schools, parents, customs, etc. They create the framework within which we work and strive to achieve visions of ourselves -- and ourselves in relation to others. One social theorist, Robert Merton, has laid out five different patterns that might illustrate how we relate to our goals and methods for achieving them:

1. conformity -- the cultural goals and the prescribed means for reaching them are possible to and accepted by the individual...
2. innovation -- one accepts the goals as appropriate, but is blocked by circumstances or personal ideology from using the accepted means...devises new ways to reach...
3. ritualization -- well socialized into institutional patterns of goal attainment, continues with such behaviour even though it is impossible to reach the goals by the means provided...
4. retreatism -- giving up of the cultural goals and the means provided to achieve them...opting out of the system....
5. rebellion -- rejects cultural goals and the means to achieve them, but goes on to posit new goals and new means...

If we apply what Merton has outlined generally to religious behavior such can be used to explain deviation within a religious institution or even to explain any religious behavior with respect to society and its goals. For example, 1) Religion may help me to "get ahead"; 2) Religion may provide psychological compensation for failure to "get ahead";

3) Religious behaviour learned as a child may be continued long after it has lost its meaning; 4) Religious communities may be places of retreat for those who reject social goals and means; or 5) Religion may become the source for new ways of looking at the world.

The last point raises the question: How do new ways of looking at the world emerge? This brings us to ways in which alienation may provide the means for "rebellion" or even "revitalization" and revival. The possibilities for the latter are especially evident if 1) A socio/economic system is sufficiently out of balance to cause a sharp increase in individual stress; or if 2) there exists widespread disillusionment, anomie (seen in a rise in crime, illness, and the destruction of family patterns).

In other words, personal or social alienation may provide the avenue by which individuals and societies are "opened" to new ways of ordering the world, or revival and evangelization.

B. Anomie and Religious Behavior

1) A Definition

Anomie = ([Gr]: a + nomos = without laws) "A state of society in which normative standards of conduct or belief are weak or lacking. In the individual it is characterized by disorientation, anxiety and isolation. Anomie often arises from the feeling that there is not enough coherent shape in the social environment for the individual to be able to find a place, a goal, or a style of life that receives any social support."

An Implication: The idea of each doing his/her "own thing" may be liberating to those who know what their "thing" is, but those who do not may feel betrayed by a society that offers no guidance or support. Such a society may seem chaotic, induce panic, and, in fact, produce a nation of conformists.

2) Anomie as we experience it

Change and stress characterize societies today. There are few factors that offer stability in today's world. One's family training, neighborhood, and class milieu are not alone determinative (if they ever were) of one's personality or development. The "consumerism" of current culture, media exposure, geographic mobility, multiplicity of choice, are some of the factors that serve to dilute the effects of home and neighborhood. The following factors add to this "formulae" for anomie:

1. Many of today's youth (literally or figuratively) do not understand the rhetoric or nature of the radical social challenges that have come at the end of the

twentieth century....

2. For many added factors of mobility has meant the loss of all primary groups, instilling a desire to keep associations shallow and commitments low, so as not to hurt when the next break in relations occurs

3. Divorce and family problems, in part a result of the cultural patterns traced above, exacerbate social problems by removing one of the last sources of stability in society.

It might be helpful to take some time and ask yourself the following question: "What kinds of change and stress are the following groups feeling?"

- 1. Parents _____
- 2. Elderly _____
- 3. Youth _____
- 4. Singles _____
- 5. Married _____
- 6. Women _____
- 7. Men _____
- 8. Societies _____

3) Traditional religion, social systems and anomie

Religions, long supported by or supportive of, national or royal authority, have found themselves since the nineteenth century in an increasingly autonomous position. The West, as well as nations under Western military, technological, economic, and administrative rule once experiencing integralist systems, have seen that pattern erode. In the West, governments had, since the seventeenth century, lost their notions of sacral government to secular ideologies which now sought to legitimate those governments through theories of social contract, representative government, etc. The extent to which these new theories of legitimacy grew out of a Christian understanding of the world is still a matter of debate. However, while Western notions were important in discrediting former integralist systems, they seldom moved the masses and reached only into an elite.

The continuing vitality of traditional religious symbolism has

been apparent in nationalist movements since the 1940's. Frequently the elite felt a need for "Westernization" which was seen to be equivalent to "modernization". However, granting mass participation in politics meant a necessary turn to traditionalist religious legitimization. Frequently "sacred republics" rather than "sacred rulers" were the result.

The West has experienced its own crisis in understanding as many of the assumptions that have driven Western self-understanding have been open to increasing radical criticism. Examples of such questions are the following:

a) Is the objective, scientific way of viewing the world and of conceiving development in terms of material technology adequate to meet basic human needs?

b) Have we developed a manipulative attitude to our natural surroundings and a linear view of the process of history that will finally destroy us?

c) How do we understand work and progress?

C. Available Symbols and the Emergence of Cults

Revival can occur in society if the symbols which give value to the society are re-vitalized. If this is not possible new leaders or groups emerge which formulate a code (blueprint) for a new ideal society. Often a prophet is found who announces the way. This can occur within a culture or at times of transition between civilizations (a point stressed by Toynbee, A Study of History). Followers are found and an organization formed that work for the transformation of society.

When such social revitalization occurs with and within the value structures of a given society we can talk of revival. Often such revitalization occurs through sects and cults or at times through the delineation of an entirely new religion, world view or scheme of values.

Question Two:

Ask yourself the following questions as you assess the function and adequacy of current values in your experience.

1) What is the purpose (nature and function) of "my" church? Is it adequately communicating values to its members? to the local community?

2) Is the church being judged "dysfunctional" by the culture?

3) Given the human phenomenon of religion, if the church is being judged "dysfunctional" where will the religious "spirit" move? You may wish to think about the nature of the goals being given people today.

III. Biblical Patterns of Religion and Power

Through recognizing the function of religion in human and social experience we come to see the power of religion. The idea of religion and power is not foreign to the Bible. Throughout Scripture we see different patterns of religion and power. By studying these we may come to a better understanding of the role of religion in person and social experience. Consider the following list. (Several of the ideas found here are suggested by Richard Bauckham, The Bible in Politics. How to Read the Bible Politically (SPCK, 1989).

A) Patterns in the Old Testament

- 1) Exodus 20 and Leviticus 19
- 2) Esther and God's Providence
- 3) Psalms (e.g., 10 and 126)
- 4) Proverbs 31:1-9

B) Patterns in the New Testament

- 1) The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:28)
- 2) Matthew 22:17 (22:34-40)
- 3) Galatians 5:1 (the exodus)
- 4) Romans 13 -- Revelation 13
- 5) Revelation 18

Question Three:

As you seek for ways in which Christianity can revitalize your own life and that of your society, consider the texts noted above. You may wish to use them as the basis for an on-going Bible study or group discussion.
