


THE ing THAT CHANGED THE WORLD


a joyous exchange


John E. Swanson

INTRODUCTION

On October 12, 1992 Americans celebrate Columbus' arrival in America 500 years ago. This is a watershed event in history.

This event involves a  ing of water, people, cultures, flora, and fauna. Because of this event the world turns in a new direction.

The theme for 1992-93 is "The  ing that Changed the World - a joyous exchange." The subject is singular, and the word is symbolized rather than written out. The emphasis is on the event of Jesus Christ in history.

One of Martin Luther's Christmas carols acknowledges this  ing.

From heaven above to earth I come
To bring good news to every home
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To all the world and gladly sing.

To you this night is born a child
Of Mary chosen virgin mild;
This new-born child of lowly birth
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

This is the Christ, God's Son most
high,
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;
He will himself your Savior be
And from all sin will set you free.

The blessing which the Father
planned
The Son holds in his infant hand,
That in his kingdom, bright and
fair,
You may with us his glory share.

Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
Through whom this sinful world is
blest.
You turned not from our needs away!
How can our thanks such love repay?

O dearest Jesus, holy child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,
A holy shrine, within my heart,
That you and I need never part.

The Columbian event can give us some insight into the Christ event. Ironically, both involve human suffering and death. There are enemies. Abuse of power, authority, and truth are a common denominator.

In these two events there are "exchanges." One thing is substituted for another. Where there is sadness there is also joy, pain, healing, death, life.

When Luther describes the Christ event he speaks of a "joyous exchange." Out of the ashes of hopelessness and despair emerges not only restitution but change. Change is both corporate and personal. Though we might be hard pressed to describe the events as joyous, the exchanges made a difference in the world.

Before engaging the theme I want to reflect on three questions:

What is religion?

What is history?

What is humanity?

These topics are not new. Theologians have been debating them for years. However, it was at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries that Christian thinkers began to struggle with them in a very aggressive fashion. Why? Because there was an expansion of intellectual development. A new scientific world view was emerging, a world view from which we benefit technically today, but from which the church continues to shutter. Prior to this time religion explained the unexplainable. With this new world view, explanations could be given for particular phenomena, and God was no longer needed for understanding.

In the 19th Century human experience was taken seriously. People found ways to use research and study the natural world. They dared to trust their observations and make projections even when the conclusions they drew were in conflict with commonly held religious views.

In the material that follows I feel it is important to affirm human experience. Also, we need to focus on how God's activity is perceived within this context.

To pique your interest I have given tentative one word answers to each question, in part to startle you and thereby motivate you to read on. These words can become hooks upon which the meat of the ideas can be hung.

What is religion? Piety.

What is history? Freedom.

What is humanity? God.

The first question deals with human experience, the second with God, and the third with God and humanity.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

It may seem peculiar to raise this question because we already know the answer. Religion is a group of beliefs, a practice, a life-style, a worship style. One can have it or not have it. There can be many gods or one God. One can believe in Jesus Christ or Satan, the Bible or the Koran, the sacredness of personality or the sanctity of a bull. Religion is not constrained to any one form.

I am concerned that Christianity be treated as a part of our personal experience. I am also concerned that emotional and spiritual highs do not become the norm for the Christian experience. Christianity is a religion of the heart and the head.

Religion has an objective side: knowledge, content, doctrine, tradition, etc. Concurrently, there is the personal, subjective side with emotion and commitment.

When the Christian religion is discussed one must begin with faith. Faith is defined in several ways. It means to believe, to accept something even though it cannot be proved. It is a substitute for demonstrated knowledge.

Faith is also defined as dependence. We depend upon an object's existence (human

and non-human). However, faith as dependence is also putting one's fate into the hands of another, allowing the other to shape, if not determine, one's destiny. Faith is placed in the parent, the teacher, the doctor, and so on.

Religious faith must be treated as something more than intellectual exercise and rational experience. Faith has the dimensions of feeling and consciousness. Religion has a personal dimension, something that touches the quick of our being, our thought, and our behavior. It means something to us.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a pastor who had the capacity to talk with the intelligentsia of his day, people who, for the most part, had "made a universe for" themselves and were "above the need of thinking of the Universe" that had made them.¹ Scientific knowledge was coming of age.

These words are appropriate for today. There is no age group exempt from the notion that human beings are in total control and that self-reliance whether for good or ill is god. People can just about do anything their hearts desire. Thus, God is of little or no consequence. "Who needs God?"

We live in a world that we think we can explain and manipulate quite well. If certain things are not explainable now, because some secrets of the universe still remain, we feel it is possible to explain these mysteries in the future.

To these people Schleiermacher spoke. During this era humans discovered many things about their world and culture. Knowledge of the universe began to expand. One system of knowledge was replacing another. Reason took the place of religious faith. Superstitious thought was being debunked. He said, ". . . belief must be something different from a mixture of opinions about God and the world, and of precepts for one life or for two."² For him, religion is found in both human knowledge and human activity, intellectual and emotional. Religion is the "feeling of absolute dependence," i.e., the "consciousness of being absolutely dependent." To him this is being in relationship with God.

The feeling of absolute dependence is a recognition of a reliance of all our being upon others outside of ourselves. The relationships are reciprocal, one entity affecting the other.

Schleiermacher discusses the feeling of dependence and the feeling of freedom. There is no such thing as absolute freedom. Everything exists in some type of dependent relationship. There is the experience of spontaneity, of release, of independence that is called freedom. One can move on and away from reliance on another. But this is only a shift in the objects of our dependence.

We essentially live in dependence upon the world outside of ourselves. The question is: are we conscious of it? Let me illustrate. The reader is more than likely in a sitting posture on a bed, in a chair, or on the floor. Think for a moment.

¹Keith W. Clements, ed., Friedrich Schleiermacher, Pioneer of Modern Theology, (London: Collins, 1987), 67.

²Ibid., 79.

Whatever you are sitting in or on is also holding you up. You are dependent upon its support. Chances are, however, not until you read this did you shift your consciousness from your brain to your buttocks.

When Schleiermacher is discussing consciousness, he asserts that the feeling of dependence is at the base of consciousness. Herein is one of the staples of religion, the feeling of absolute dependence.

Schleiermacher would say that it is in this feeling of absolute dependence that one experiences God. The dependent relationship with the other has its source in God. Schleiermacher is not trying to prove that God exists. For him the whence of this experience, i.e., the source of this experience, is "designated by the word 'God'." His argument is that if one assents in any way to an idea of God, ultimately this is what one is experiencing. "The immediate self-consciousness" of absolute dependence "becomes a consciousness of God."³

This consciousness of dependence involves probing deeply into one's own psyche. For some people, dependence is acknowledged casually. It may even be recognized intellectually. In fact for some, dependence can be experienced at the same time one feels independent. For Schleiermacher, one must go deeply into one's very being to discover that all of life is grounded, dependent upon another. There is no independence. Thus, the pious consciousness of God cannot be superficial.

The feeling of being religious is often expressed in ecstatic types of behavior or in emotional "binges." For some this means a consciousness of God. Somehow one is to feel God as water pours down over one's head or wine warms the stomach. "Feeling" for Schleiermacher is not this at all. Not to say there cannot be an ecstasy. Feeling is a consciousness, a living knowingly in dependence, a reliance upon another. We recognize the chair that holds us up.

Schleiermacher uses the word "piety" for "the consciousness of ultimate dependence" and says that once this characteristic of a person is attained it becomes "the essence of (one's) human nature."⁴

For many, Christianity is something handed down, expected, a part of the family tradition, a way to behave in the social world, a way to deal with life and death. But does it ever become something that one embraces and senses being embraced by? Something owned? Is there a consciousness of ultimate dependence upon God?

How does one have this consciousness "awakened" and nurtured in oneself? For Schleiermacher it is found by participating in the community of believers. As people abide together and converse about and share their own faith so their awareness is piqued. The Church becomes integral to this scheme. Piety cannot exist outside of the church.

In this community two things happen. First, the community is the source of the understanding of God. It is the community's "story" that acknowledges that this is


³Ibid., 103-104.

⁴Ibid., 173.

how reality is understood. God is the source of dependence. Therefore, the experience of ultimate dependence is the experience of God. Second, within this community one's profession of this consciousness of dependence is made. For whatever reason it is motivated, the individual now has both the support of others in the community and the reminder by the community that this profession was made.

What is religion? My tentative answer is "piety," i.e. a "consciousness of dependence upon God," a sense of ownership of God and ownership by God.

WHAT IS HISTORY?

When dealing with a theme like "The ing that Changed the world - a joyous exchange" that takes history seriously, it might be helpful to ask about history itself.

History is more than reports, more than occurrences. History is the word for the interaction that takes place within all of creation, the continuity of these actions, and their development. History can be written on pages of books and etched into rocks. It can be seen in the traces of prehistoric organisms. History is simply life unfolding, documented and undocumented, interpreted and uninterpreted.

For many, history is solely human events: wars, politics, nations and empires rising and falling. We are now acknowledging that the nonhuman world has a history. All creation interacts, and the history is written. It is arrogant to think humans are the only actors on the stage.

The reports of history can be pessimistic. The unfolding of events can often point at the evil that prevails in the world. I would like you to reflect on a more optimistic world view because it seems to me to say something to our age that puts the movement of history in God's hands rather than in humanity's. It is not an idea without problems. It does not easily answer the questions of sin, death, and the power of evil.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a philosopher of history and is known for his historical method of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. It is said of him that he "un chained the most irrational and irreligious movements - Fascism and Communism" and "inspired the most democratic: Walt Whitman and John Dewey."⁵ There were people who went to both the right and left of Hegel. Some considered him the pure philosopher.

He had one notion that fits into this discussion. He says, "World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom."⁶ Freedom is God acting out God's own self-consciousness. He acknowledges that the source of this idea is founded in the teachings of Christianity.

According to Hegel, God acts out the process of freedom in history. This reaches

⁵G. W. F. Hegel, Reason in History, a General Introduction to the Philosophy of History, trans. and ed., with an introduction by Robert S. Hartman (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), xi.

⁶Ibid., 24.

fulfillment in a world community.

So what is history? One answer is that it is the unfolding of God in the world as expressed in freedom.

To some this may be a fearsome thought because it can open doors for revolution. Nonetheless, it is acknowledging both on a personal plain and a historical plain that freedom is when individuals, communities, nations, and races are allowed to be who they are without impositions from without but living responsibly and openly within.

When we think in these terms, the role of Christ, He who comes to set creation free, takes on dimensions of great proportion. The crucified and risen Lord has broken the bonds of sin, death, and the power of evil. Jesus Christ reigns! The victory is accomplished. Freedom!

Jesus Christ enters history proclaiming the Kingdom of God says the Gospel of Mark. What is he pronouncing? Freedom!

When Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) discusses the idea of the Kingdom of God he makes these observations. The Kingdom of God has two realities: an internal and an external. The internal reality is that the Kingdom of God comes to the individual and lays hold of the person. The external reality is that God rules; God is God's own power.¹ The Kingdom of God is also something that is future, as expressing the ultimate, eternal rule of God. But it is also inward, within the person, making itself known in the present moment.

For Harnack, the first meaning of the Kingdom of God is that the kingdom and the power of the devil are vanquished. Secondly, it means that the sick are healed. Third, the Kingdom is God's forgiveness of sins.

It is at this point I want to introduce my own thinking. In a sense I am taking ideas from both Hegel and Harnack: "freedom" as the activity of God (Hegel) and "moment" as the event of God (Harnack).

There are "moments" in history, the glimmering of something that might only be a "piece of heaven" or a "slice of hell." Life and order are affected; but changes are not always radical. Sometimes these moments can be elongated, but they do not last. Why? Because other aspects of life begin to impact upon and impede them. The moment can only live itself out, and then it is no more.

An example is the bursting forth of a beautiful flower. It lasts just for a while, and then it dies. It influences other things and is influenced by them. It makes a contribution to the natural world, but it is absorbed in the on-rush of the natural process when its flourishing life ceases. It has its identity and then dies and becomes a part of another series of natural occurrences.

What I want understood is the significance and worth of the "moment." It is a way

¹Adolf von Harnack, What Is Christianity?, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders, with introduction by Rudolf Bultmann, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). 56.

to say there is a brief elapse of time when something flourishes within the time line of history. The measure can be small, the interval brief.

The second notion is "freedom." Hegel uses this word to express the self-realization of God. I believe there are "moments" of freedom, of people being set free, of people experiencing fulfillment in the process of history.

When Harnack describes his understanding of the Kingdom of God is he not stating dimensions of freedom: evil overpowered, hope renewed, and relationships restored?

As we ponder the unfolding of history today, it appears that the rule of God, the self-realization of God, freedom, are snippets, spurts, moments. History unfolds in "moments of freedom." In these moments all of creation participates either as a co-contributor or a co-recipient.⁸

Why are they just moments? What limits freedom? The condition has traditionally been called sin, the bondage that humans experience. Freedom is always in the process of fits and starts, of breaking through and being frustrated. But freedom never ceases coming into being. Freedom is ultimately more powerful than the forces that seem to shut freedom off.

What is religion? Religion is a human's pious consciousness of dependence upon God. Piety! What is history? History is God actualizing God's very nature. Freedom!

WHAT IS HUMANITY?

The tentative answer to this question is "God." The intention here is to understand the humanity of God.

Humanity is the precise and explicit way in which God engages and intersects with the world in a most concrete fashion. One might even say that the humanity is Jesus Christ both as the historical event and as God in history. This is to say that humanity is both the historical Jesus as well as the human race.

Let me give some explanation. We need to take seriously the humanity of God. This is unique to the Christian religion. But it has some pitfalls.

Humans are self-conscious beings. Humans are real. Humans operate by senses. Humans have the capacity to speculate, to project, to anticipate the future. In fact humans can wish and imagine living in another person or place or time. "Quantum Leap" is possible in our imagination. Yet, humans are flesh and blood, sense and desire, thoughts and dreams, etc.

It is not uncommon to describe humans from a negative position. The theology that prevails on the air waves and in many conservative Christian communities is a revivalist theology that says in effect that in order to talk about God one must

⁸An example of this is found in a discussion of how slaves lived in Montserrat. See Lydia M. Pulsipher, "Galways Plantation, Montserrat," in Seeds of Change, ed. Herman J. Viola and Carolyn Margolis, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 157-158.

talk first of human sin. After this is acknowledged by the individual, then there is the need for repentance (change of direction) and the opening of self to faith in Jesus Christ. The initial image of the human is pessimistic and negative.

Another thrust in our world is to affirm the unity of the human species with all of creation and to affirm the blessings of the human race, a positive understanding.

When relating humanity and God it is important to realize an immediate problem - the tendency for humans to create a God that looks like humans. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) provided many positive insights about the human being. However, he shares one perception of which we must be conscious. He says religion is found in feeling and in wish. God is really a projection of oneself, what one wishes and desires, but does not have. Religion is putting to fullest use one's imagination. Feuerbach does not condemn this type of thought process. In fact, he would affirm that there is value in it. His concern is that people be capable of distinguishing between what one imagines in the mind and what one perceives with the senses.⁹ Thus, religion can be wishful thinking, and God can be the ideal of a good human being.

Christianity is not wishful thinking, and God is not an extension of the human being. We believe in a God who chooses to make the God-self known through the human. My thesis is that humanity is God's intentional intersecting with the world. God's work in the world is not limited in time and space. It is universal, involved in every aspect of existence. But there is a unique manner in which God works and makes the God-self known and that is through humanity. First, we know God in Jesus Christ. Second, human beings are called by Christ to be the disciples and the witnesses of God, God's agents in the world.

To help us to reflect on this topic I want to present some of the thoughts of David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874). He says several important things. First, he points out how the life of Christ has been used by the Church as an idea rather than as a historical personality. Second, he describes that historical event of Christ as God alienating God's self. Third, he has an understanding of the divine acting in humanity that is not limited to Jesus Christ.

Strauss' audience, like Schleiermacher's, had those who responded to the new dimensions of knowledge and had developed a rationalistic system for Christianity. Strauss characterized several ways people perceive Jesus as a symbol: a teacher of religion, an ideal of moral perfection (an example of sacrificial living), and a poetic understanding of the good life.

Strauss' view is that God has entered as a human into the human race. This is called incarnation. He accepts from Immanuel Kant that God has been incarnationally involved since the beginning of the human race. The word Strauss uses for this activity of God is "alienation." God alienates the self of God and appears as a human being.

Humanity, namely Jesus Christ, is how God interfaces, intersects with the world.

⁹Claude Welch, Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 1, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 74.

Strauss could not conceive nor understand God's entering into history as isolated to one person. To him incarnation was a constant, continued act of God since the time humans became a unique species. That is to say, the life of Jesus was merely an occasion to elevate this activity of God to universal consciousness and that humans can perceive the "idea of humanity" in a concrete form. There was no way in Strauss' thinking that this love of God found incarnate in Jesus Christ could be confined to or contained within one person.¹⁰

For Strauss Christ is historical, Christ is the event of God entering human history, and the exchange between divinity and humanity is highlighted.

As Christians we must take seriously that the Christ is not merely an ideal person. There is more to the Christ than knowing about His personal attributes which can be emulated. Jesus Christ is God.

We may not support the idea that the unique God-human characteristics of Christ are descriptive of the human race. Yet, when a Christian is called to act on God's behalf, to be a disciple, etc. is this solely a person doing what God wants to be done or is this God acting self-consciously in the world in humanity? The latter seems true to me.

If we reduce the activity of God to something outside of humanity we deny the incarnation of God.

In one form or another the interaction with the world by God through humanity has been abused. The Reformation at the time of Luther was an attempt to challenge the abuses of humans assuming divine power to further their own ends. A way to resolve that was to substitute the incarnation of God in humanity (as seen in Jesus Christ and claimed by the leaders of the Church) with the incarnation of God in the Bible, "the Protestant perpetuation of the Divine incarnation," says Ernest Troeltsch, another 19th century theologian (1865-1923).¹¹

Today, Christians struggle with this issue when claiming the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. When the Bible becomes the incarnation of God then the incarnation of Christ and God's work in his followers is demeaned.

The idea of God-human and the incarnation are brought together in a key passage for this theme.¹² Paul writes to the Philippians:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,


¹⁰Lawrence S.. Stepelevich, ed., The Young Hegelians - an Anthology, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 24-49.


¹¹Ernest Troeltsch, Protestantism and Progress, The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 36.


¹²This is called Kenosis Christology. Kenosis means "to empty." God is emptied when God becomes a human being.


but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.
 And being found in human form,
 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death -
 even death on a cross.
 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name
 that is above every name,
 so that at the name of Jesus
 every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 and every tongue should confess
 that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (2:5-11 NRSV)

CONCLUSION TO INTRODUCTION

Each of these questions and answers deals with the ing that changed the world.

First, the  is not solely an event in history, way back when. It is a personal experience, too. There is something that happens to the individual.

Second, the  is not limited to the religious/spiritual experience. Wherever freedom is experienced mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, culturally, and nationally. It is an expression of God's activity in the world. We recognize it within the Christian community because we know the Christ who sets the world free.

Third, the  is a human symbol. It is a human form of execution for human misdeeds. God did not "create" the cross. Yet, God chose it to change the world.

BEFORE GOING ON

There are questions about the rightness and wrongness of celebrating Columbus' voyage to the Americas in 1492. There are those who point to the destruction of people and environments with the invasion that followed Columbus. The "Old World" settlers brought plants and animals that disrupted the ecosystem and disease that killed. The extensions of these actions today are the disregard for what the Native Americans contributed, the perpetuation of the European perception that American Indians are savages at worst and non-persons at best.

Unfortunately, this emphasis tends to focus on evil deeds of the white people, calling for repentance by the white community. There is moderate regard for the contributions of Native Americans to the world.

An alternative viewpoint is that if Columbus had not made the initial connection with the Americas someone else would have. The white supremacy of Europeans is not denied. However, there is greater emphasis on the contributions of the Native Americans to the world.

This paper attempts to synthesize, counterpoint, and juxtapose a variety of themes using the Columbus event, the incarnation of God in Christ, Christ's death and resurrection, environmental themes, and social issues. These topics are discussed so events can be held up to each other and they can "interact with" and "inform" each other.

The end result of this is not only new understandings, but a call to action about how a Christian can live faithfully as a cross bearer¹³ for the sake of all creation.

There is an assumption being made in this paper. The good and bad that people do, the evil and dastardly consequences that result from these actions, the altruistic intentions as well as the diabolical, the seemingly non-irreversible directions which seem to be the course of history are in no way greater than God's ultimate action expressed and accomplished in the Christ for the redemption of the world. One must take seriously Paul's words:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rules, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

CHAPTER 1

POTATOES AND CORN FOR THE WORLD

Do you know what potatoes have done for the world? One could not say they saved the world, but they have made it possible for some nations to survive and multiply. People who study populations and nutrition give potatoes the credit.¹⁴

Briefly state, the potato was cultivated in South America, transported to Europe where it had influence on Ireland, Germany, and Russia, and then was brought back across the Atlantic to New England in 1718.¹⁵

What makes the potato so valuable? It can produce more calories per acre than grains, survive in damp weather, and be stored in the ground for a longer period of time before rotting.

There are many types of potatoes. The story is told that the tribes in South American had specific plots. The methods of cultivation were very sophisticated and detailed. The natives of the Andes cultivated the potato for at least 4000 years. It is an apparent descendent of a tuberous solanum. When the Spaniards arrived, Andean farmers were producing 300 different types of potatoes. The Andean farmers

¹³The name "Christopher" means "Christ-bearer." Note how Columbus signed his name.

¹⁴Historians are realizing that it was the spread of American food crops in Europe, Asia, and Africa that made the significant contribution to the Old World and not the silver and gold making Spain a powerful nation for more than a century. In addition to potatoes the crops included maize, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, manioc, cacao, various kinds of peppers, beans, and squashes. (William H. McNeill, "American Food Crops in the Old World," in Seeds of Change, 43.)

¹⁵Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., The Columbian Exchange, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972), 66.

also knew how to freeze dry the potato.¹⁶

Had it not been for the Spaniards in search of gold and looking for a staple that would feed the sailors returning the gold to the Old World, the potato may have never been learned about nor distributed throughout the world.

Today, agronomists tell us that the sweet potato is the staple food among the poor in China. Rice is the staple of the elite. 80% of the world's production of the sweet potato in 1986 was in China. It yields three to four times that of rice. Indonesia also ranks as one of the world's leading sweet potato producers today, 2.6 million metric tons in 1962.

One could tell the story of maize and tapioca, too. These have been important foods throughout the world. Maize is unique because it is food for both humans and animals. Maize has the benefit of producing food fast. Few other plants produce so much carbohydrate, sugar, and fat in as short a growing season.

The reason for telling the story of the potato is that 1492 is a turning point in the history of the world. We may be aware of the Aztec and Inca cultures that were very wealthy, and we know they were exploited by the Spaniards. However, by a series of unfortunate, hostile, and self-serving actions a carefully cultivated product indigenous to South America became the major staple for the world. It is credited, for better or worse, for the increase in population and the spread of industrialization in northern Europe.

The potato existed endemically for over 4,000 years in South America. Suddenly the time (kairos) came in history when it was made available to the whole world. Various staples had existed prior to that in other parts of the world. People were able to get along with what they had. They did not realize there was something better. But there was. The potato crossed the ocean and transformed lives. The Americas made a contribution.¹⁷

Potatoes and other American foods gave rise to Europe's domination from the 18th to the 20th Centuries. Given all the crops grown world-wide, the Native Americans produced three-fifths of them.

The Christ event some 2000 years ago was an event that brought about a radical change. God had invested in history all along. There is a record of this in the Old Testament. The teachings (the Laws), the prophets, the proclamations, and the community of faith existed. And then an event unlike any other occurred. God entered human history. Paul puts it this way:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. (Galatians 4:4-5)

¹⁶Jack Weatherford, Indian Giver: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World, (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988), 63-64.

¹⁷What potatoes did for the Germans and Russians maize did for the mountain Greeks and Serbs between 1700 and 1914. (McNeil, op. cit., 51-52.)

Paul also tells this story in Philippians 2:5-11.

God crosses between timelessness (eternity) and time, heaven and earth (as Luther's Christmas carol puts it) and becomes one with humanity. Paul's words are called the Kenosis Christology. It is the "incarnation" (in-body) of God. We call it the humanity of God. This is the Christmas celebration.


What this story means is that the God whose nature is to be outside of humanity, other than humans (alien), becomes one with humanity. God is not a stranger known only through something else. Christ is known as Immanuel - God with us.

In the Baptism and the Transfiguration events, Jesus is acknowledged as the Son of God. People are instructed to listen to him. Christ speaks. God speaks.

The New Testament, especially John, is filled with descriptions of Jesus which relate what God is like: life producing, self-giving, nurturing, etc.

The story of the potato is an analogy of God. In the midst of history at a time one would least expect, an event occurs that impacts the world and brings about change.

Recently, the telling of the Columbus story introduces the "Columbian Exchange." Volumes are being written about what Columbus and those who followed him brought to the Americas and what the Americas contributed to the world. Alfred Crosby, Jr. claims that "the most important changes brought on by the Columbian voyages were biological in nature."¹⁸

The Columbian Exchange was far reaching. It was a ing that changed the world. However, it was not the only one. God's entrance into the human community was a far more significant crossing. This singular event has touched people, systems, and life styles throughout all of creation.

CHAPTER 2

GOLD AND SILVER/SUFFERING AND DEATH

As one studies the environmental effects upon a world after Columbus, one notices the exchanges of flora between the New World to the Old.

In addition to plants and animals the exchange included silver and gold. Spain became a wealthy country, at least for a short while, because of the mining of gold in South America. Both the ecology and the economy of the world were impacted.¹⁹ Whether talking about gold and silver or sugar cane plantations, the European attitude toward resources was that they should be controlled by humans and managed to enhance profits.

¹⁸Crosby, op. cit., XIV.

¹⁹The words have a similar root. "Eco" means home; "logo" means study; "mony" means manage. The two really go hand in hand. As one studies the relationships of organisms one also becomes involved in their management.

The study of gold mining focuses on the Bolivian Andes at Potosi, a word that became synonymous with fabulous and inexhaustible wealth. The Spaniards got their bounty and shipped it home. The miners were the natives who still today are treated poorly. At the mountain, the Cerro Rio, the "rich hill," we see gold and silver with suffering and death as the by-products.

Columbus stated in his diaries, "I was anxious to learn whether they had gold."²⁰ The drive to gain gold was greater than the quest for silver, spices, and souls.

The exchange for the Spaniards was phenomenal. The economy of Europe was greatly enhanced by this discovery. But only at the expense of the Native Americans who were exploited. At the time of Columbus, Europe had only about \$200 million worth of gold and silver, approximately \$2 per person. By 1600 the supply of precious metals increased approximately eight times. Gold was important to the Native Americans, but their interest was more aesthetic and religious than mercenary.

The impression that Europe had of Native Americans is that they were savages at best. There was no dignity. The ethnocentrism of Europeans led them to ignore or dismiss Native American knowledge. The wide diversity of food, medicine, fuel, and shelter of the New World was not appreciated.²¹ One of the European arguments went like this: According to a Roman Catholic priest, if God had intended that Native Americans be Christians God would have made it possible for them to grow grapes for wine for the sacrament. The problem Europeans had with Native Americans in part stems from the European religious (Christianity) and philosophical (Aristotelian) intellectual heritage. These systems could not accommodate the Europeans' findings in the New World.

The ancient and medieval pronouncements on humans and human behavior seemed to leave Europeans little choice but to condemn the Indians as allies of the Devil. . . The Europeans had either to conceive of the naturalness of cultural diversity and invent cultural toleration to go along with it, or to assume that Indians were in league with Hell. Most made the latter choice. . .

The Bible was the source of most wisdom, and the book of Genesis told all that one needed to know about the beginning of the heavens, earth, angels, plants, animals, and men. There was one God and there had been one Creation; when mankind had offended God, God caused a great flood in which all land creatures, including men, had perished, except those preserved in Noah's ark. This explanation seemed sufficiently broad to include within its bounds all the diversity of life - plant, animal, and human - which the European was obliged to acknowledge up to the end of the fifteenth century. Then . . . Columbus brought whole new worlds crashing into the area of European perception.

The problems of explaining Africa and Asia were difficult but surmountable. After all, it had always been known that they were there and, if Europeans had not seen elephants they had at least always known about them. But America, who had ever dreamed of America? The uniqueness of the New World called into

²⁰Weatherford, op. cit., 6-7.

²¹Steven King and Liliana Campos Dudley, "Nature's Future," Seeds of Change, 252.

question the whole Christian cosmogony. If God had created all the life forms in one week in one place and they had then spread out from there over the whole world, then why are the life forms in the eastern and western hemispheres so different? And if all land animals and men had drowned except for those in the ark, and all that now exist are descended from those chosen few, then why the different kinds of animals and men on either side of the Atlantic? . . . The effort to maintain the Hebraic version of the origin of life and man was to "put many learned Christians upon the rack to make it out."

The problem tempted a few Europeans to toy with the concept of multiple creations, but the mass of people clung to monogeneticism. They had to; it was basic to Christianity.²²

Thus, it was perfectly legitimate in the minds of the Europeans to abuse the natives and to take their resources. There was no remorse or guilt.

It was also felt that the Native American culture was degenerate and not worth perpetuating. Plus, the Europeans wanted their own culture, expecting the natives to conform to them.

Had the European settlers come to the New World with the idea of learning to live in these pleasant new surroundings in amicable coexistence with the native inhabitants, history would have taken a different turn. Instead they came with the vision that there was money to be made by taming these alien tropical environments into efficient production units supplying Old World markets.²³

The story of Jesus Christ has a similar ring. Jesus becomes involved with other human beings. His life is rendered useless by the authorities. He is degraded. He is caused to suffer and die.

But wait . . . There is a different ending to this story. We realize that this death is an event that sets people free and gives new life. It does more than improve the economy. It makes possible a whole new way of being human, a life that is not bound to sin, death, and the power of evil.

Traditionally, this topic is discussed under the word "atonement." The understanding is that in the cross of Christ God brings back into relationship with the God-self the world which is separated from God. Often the word is spelled "at-one-ment." This is God's desire, God's act, and is a result of God's own initiative.

There are several theories of atonement. One is the Subjective Theory which focuses upon the love God has for humanity to the degree that God's only Son dies for humanity. Jesus is the supreme example of unselfish love. Thus, Jesus is a model of behavior. If God loves like this, should humans not love in the same way? Sometimes this is called the Moral Theory.

The Moral Theory limits itself to one example and does not take into perspective the

²²Crosby, op. cit., 9-11.

²³Pulsipher, op. cit., 141.

cosmic nature of the historicity of the cross.

A second theory is the Objective Theory. This is probably the most popular one and is used almost exclusively within Roman Catholic and Protestant Fundamentalist circles. This theory states that Christ has paid for the sins of humanity. Humans deserve punishment; they are bought into the court room to be judged. However, instead of the person receiving the punishment, Christ steps in the place of the human and takes on the punishment himself. There are many Bible passages that support this theory. No longer do we pay for our sins. God has worked it out. We are forgiven freely. God in Christ on the cross built up such an account (such as credit in the bank) that sins can continued be paid for.

This theory dramatized the forgiveness of God, the debt God pays for humankind freely, the way God substitutes for humanity. However, it raises several question. Among them - to whom is the debt paid?

A third theory is called the Classical Theory, Christus Victor. This one is very popular in Lutheran circles. It holds that the cross of Christ is a cosmic, eternal, catholic (these modifiers do overlap) event in which God in Christ overcomes once and for all the powers of destruction - sin, death, and the devil. Humanity lives on the victory side of the cross, the resurrection, the watershed event. This particular theory is criticized because it emphasizes the resurrection at the expense of the crucifixion.

A fourth theory is really a mix of the previous two, Priest-Victim. It expresses that one must talk earnestly about the cross. If there is no death, there is no resurrection. There is suffering, pain, loneliness, and God-forsakenness.

Christ's suffering was physical and moral. The depth of his sorrow comes from the fact that he felt himself abandoned by God. From Luther's point of view, Christ was not only humiliated by God, but was abandoned by him. God failed Jesus. God withdrew from Jesus.

Jürgen Moltmann states the pathos of the cross event in a poetic form:

He who proclaimed that the kingdom was near
died abandoned by God.
He who anticipated the future of God in miracles and casting out demons
died helpless on the cross.
He who revealed the righteousness of God with an authority greater than Moses
died according to the provision of the law as a blasphemer.
He who spread the love of God in his fellowship with the poor and the sinners
met his end between two criminals on the cross.²⁴

Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes it this way:

Suffering means being cut off from God. Therefore those who live in communion with him cannot really suffer. This Old Testament doctrine was expressly reaffirmed by Jesus. That is why he takes upon himself the suffering of the whole

²⁴Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 125.

world, and in doing so proves victorious over it. He bears the whole burden of humanity's separation from God, and in the very act of drinking the cup he causes it to pass over him.²⁵

It must be emphasized that each of the atonement theories has limitations. No one can fully describe the cross of Christ. Thus, each theory must be seen as a facet of the diamond.

The Bible interprets the cross of Christ in many ways. It uses metaphors of redemption, rescuing, freeing, making things new, healing, sacrificing, etc.

Luther describes the cross of Christ as the "joyous exchange," the exchange between the righteousness of God on the one hand and human sin on the other. Christ takes upon himself the sin of believers and gives them his righteousness (goodness). We do not deserve it (as Luther repeats often). We are called both sinner and saint.

In the tract, "The Freedom of the Christian," Luther uses the analogy of a bride and groom to describe the exchange.

. . . faith . . . unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. And by this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh. And if they are one flesh and there is between them . . . the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but frail types of this one true marriage, it follows that all they have they have in common, the good as well as the evil, so that the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as if it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as His own. Let us compare these and we shall see things that cannot be estimated. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation; the soul is full of sins, death, and condemnation. Now let faith come between them, and it shall come to pass that sins, death, and hell are Christ's, and grace, life, and salvation are the soul's. For it behooves Him, if He is a bridegroom, to take upon Himself the things which are His bride's, and to bestow upon her the things that are His. For if He gives her His body and His very self, how shall He not give her all that is His? And if He takes the body of the bride, how shall He not take all that is hers?

Lo! here we have a pleasant vision not only of communion, but of a blessed strife and victory and salvation and redemption. For Christ is God and man in one person, who has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and who cannot sin, die, or be condemned; His righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent; and He by the wedding ring of faith shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are His bride's, nay, makes them His own, and acts as if they were His own, and as if He Himself had sinned; He suffered, died, and descended into hell that He might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow Him up, they are of necessity swallowed up of Him in a mighty duel. For His righteousness is greater than the sins of all men, His life stronger than death, His salvation more invincible than hell. Thus the believing soul by the pledge of its faith is free in Christ, its Bridegroom, from all sins, secure against

²⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, (New York: MacMillan, 1957), 75.

death and against hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life and salvation of Christ, its Bridegroom. So He presents to Himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing in the Word of life, that is, by faith in the Word of life, of righteousness, and of salvation. Thus He marries her to Himself in faith, in loving kindness, and in mercies, in righteousness and in judgment, as Hosea 2 says.²⁵

It is not strictly accurate to talk of "exchange." An exchange would lead one to suppose there are two partners who make a deal in which each one contributes and receives benefits from the other equally. In this case, all the benefits come from one of the partners, namely, Jesus Christ.

Luther makes the distinction between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross. The theology of glory is a theology in which humans gain a relationship with God by their own acts of perfection. They do good acts to gain God's acceptance. It is best described as a ladder up which a person climbs to get to God.

The theology of the cross means that God not only enters human history as discussed in the previous chapter, but also enters into the pain, suffering, and loneliness that characterizes the human condition.

The Columbian exchange is not entirely a joyous exchange. The gold and silver were acquired with innocent suffering and death. This does not mean that the ends justify the means.

The joyous exchange has a similar character. Luther says in the explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed, ". . . he has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, not with silver and gold, but with his innocent suffering and death . . ." The ends do not justify the means here either. However, there is more to the story.

The question for the Christian, it seems, is which exchange makes the most difference in and to the world: the joyous exchange or the Columbian exchange? It is a statement of faith that the joyous exchange is the ultimate statement of how God dares to take on evil and exchange it for good.

CHAPTER 3

SUGAR AND SLAVES

With the introduction of sugar cane to the Americas came the maltreatment of Native Americans and introduction of the African slave trade. The correlation of these activities belies the Europeans' regard of Native Americans as flora and fauna to be exploited and not as people with histories as rich and ancient as their own. The Europeans could not image that these people could offer anything of aesthetic or

²⁵ Martin Luther, Three Treatises, (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 260-261.

cultural value.²⁷ Here we see the beginning of the relationship of industry and slavery, of the production of goods and the abuse of people.

Some Native Americans may have been forced to work on the first Caribbean sugar cane plantations, but most of the work was probably done by enslaved Africans.²⁸

The correlation of the treatment of people as non-humans tells several things. First, overt acts of self-satisfaction, power, and greed are sin. What would appear to be a delight in learning about another nation of people becomes an expression of savage treatment. In fact, Columbus was accused of these types of crimes and was returned to Spain in chains after his last voyage because of that behavior.

Second, it would seem that people who claimed to be Christians would have figured out what Christianity was all about and would not have behaved as they did.

Sugar cane harmed people and the environment. It introduced the plantation system and assaulted the rain forest of the New World (deforestation) which led to draught and erosion. Sugar cane is a labor-intensive crop absorbing huge human resources. Native Americans were enslaved. They were free labor. But they died due to disease introduced by the Europeans. Without slavery the New World would not have been developed.²⁹

It is naive on our part to think sin is not a part of any system where humans are involved. There is the temptation to think that an act is good business or there are consequences that cannot be avoided. But the fact is that sin prevails in all actions as altruistic and noble as they may be.

In the work of Christ to release us from the grip of sin we must recognize the prevailing state of sin, that it is forgiven, but also that humanity is given the motivation and pointed in the direction of doing and being good.

There is the notion afoot that forgiveness deals only with the past. WRONG! It closes the past and opens the future. This future is that in which one can affect what happens and do that which is good.

Though the deeds may be good, they are not meritorious. They do not gain salvation. Goodness is done because of salvation. One is declared good in Christ and therefore is considered "righteous." Luther calls this "alien righteousness." It is not something we have from within ourselves. It comes from without, from another. In this case, it comes from Christ himself.

In The Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan says there are three things necessary for day to day living. When Christian first began his journey he was carrying a heavy load on his back. At one point he made his way up a path that is between two walls.

He climbed a little hill where he saw a cross at the top and a grave at the bottom. As he came up to the cross, the burden fell off his back and tumbled

²⁷Herman J. Viola, "Seeds of Change," in Seeds of Change, 12.

²⁸Sidney W. Mintz, "Pleasure, Profit, and Satiation," in Seeds of Change, 118.

²⁹Tom Morganthau, "Slavery: How It Built the New World," Newsweek, Fall/Winter 1991, 12.

into the open grave where it disappeared from sight forever. How happy Christian was! . . . As he looked and wept for joy, three shining ones approached and greeted him. The first said, "Your sins are forgiven." The second stripped away his rags and said, "I clothe you with rich apparel." The third put a mark on his forehead and gave him a parchment with a seal on it with instructions to read it as he traveled and finally to turn it in at the Celestial Gate.³⁰

First, forgiveness. It can be defined several ways. One is that God does not hold a person guilty for one's sins. Another is that God accepts the person in spite of one's sinfulness. Or God accepts the person, but does not approve of the behavior. And still one can talk about God's action of not holding one's sins against a person, but encouraging the person to live a responsible, rightful life. Forgiveness is God restoring people to God's self and to others when relations have been broken.

At the starting point of forgiveness is the cross. God accepts the world in spite of what the world has done to God and to God's Son. Nonetheless, God continues to love. For some, forgiveness is the stopping point. Poorly understood as God being indifferent to human behavior, it is possible that one can gloss over misdeeds with the idea that God will forget what has happened and call it forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not intended to simply blot out misdeeds. It is God's way to bring people back to God. More so, forgiveness is to give persons new starts to live good lives.

There is the notion that humans progress in their moral development. For Lutherans such thinking is not the case. Lutherans believe that there is daily renewal to new behavior. Sin is washed away; a new person comes forth. Humans are constantly engaged in being forgiven and being made new people.

This new life is symbolized by the robe of righteousness ("goodness"). Read Jesus' parable in Matthew 22:1-14. As Luther perceives and interprets this, the goodness or righteousness of a person is "alien." It comes from beyond oneself. The good we do is Christ in us. He clothes us. By his own action he makes us right. Goodness is not of our own doing.

In addition to being forgiven and clothed with righteousness, the Christian is also marked, marked with the cross. This distinguishes the Christian from others.

The Christian is a new person. The Christian knows, experiences, and struggles with the conditions of being natural. One is a sinner, a seeker for pleasure and power. The natural inclination is to turn against God, to reject God, to disobey God, to be God. Rebellion, indifference, and error make up the natural person.

What is repentance? For some this act of "turning around" leads to forgiveness. NO! Repentance leads to renewal. There is repentance because there is forgiveness.

True, one may not know the depth of forgiveness until one repents. But the condition and gift of forgiveness exists before one makes any move on their part. God acts first.

³⁰John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, retold by Gladys Larson, (Chicago: Covenant, 1978), 15-16.

It may seem strange to speak of sin and goodness in the same breath. However, they go together. Action can cross over from sin to goodness, but it needs a cross to make it happen.

We can accuse the Europeans for their mistreatment of Native Americans and Africans, but we need to recognize ourselves for what we do. To look at history we are often looking into a mirror.

Notice the process of photosynthesis in a leaf.

Sucrose is produced in green plants by photosynthesis in a complex series of reactions in which the energy of sunlight is absorbed by the chlorophyll of the leaves to convert carbon dioxide from the air and water from the soil into organic compounds, liberating oxygen in the process. Manufacture of sucrose and other carbohydrates by green plants is a vital part of the architecture of life on earth. Since these plants are food for much of the animal world, plants and animals stand in a strikingly interdependent relationship. The remarkable capacity of green plants to produce sugars and liberate oxygen is the obverse of human chemistry. In effect, we produce carbon dioxide and consume sugars; while green plants give off oxygen and produce sugars, and consume carbon dioxide.³¹

Forgiveness is not photosynthesis. But there are similarities. A catalytic event, an exchange, occurs and takes carbon dioxide (one of the causes of the green house effect) and converts it into something worth while for the plant, the air, and other organisms.

It is a travesty of human existence how slavery has been a mode of existence - free labor. It is a travesty how humans are enslaved to sin. However, it is by the cross of Christ one can be set free from sin and made a captive to Christ.

A hymn which I have enjoyed over the years opens with these words: "Make me a captive Lord, and then I shall be free."

The joyous exchange extends itself into daily life: forgiveness to goodness, repentance to renewal, slavery to freedom.

CHAPTER 4

RISKING DIS-EASE

Chances are, no one really thought about it. They may have been only mildly knowledgeable on the subject. Bacteria - a necessity in the life force, but out of place, it could raise havoc.

Europeans brought disease to the Americas. The list includes small pox, measles, whooping cough, bubonic plague, syphilis, malaria, yellow fever, diphtheria, amoebic dysentery, and influenza. They were devastating because of the "immunologically naive population."³² It is conjectured that many of the Native Americans who were

³¹Mintz, op. cit., 115.

³²Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., "Metamorphosis of the Americas," Seeds of Change, 85.

put to work by the Spaniards, because the Spaniards did not want to work hard anyway, died not only because of fatiguing work and unhealthy climate but intestinal parasites and venereal disease.³³ Crosby says:

There are many explanations for the Europeans' success in America: the advantage of steel over stone, of cannon and firearms over bows and arrows and slings; the terrorizing effect of horses on foot soldiers who have never seen such beasts before; the lack of unity among the Indians, even within their empires; the prophecies in Indian mythology about the arrival of white gods.³⁴

However, the chief cause was disease.

Migration of man and his maladies is the chief cause of epidemics. And when migration takes place, those creatures who have been longest in isolation suffer most, for their genetic material has been least tempered by the variety of world diseases. . . the American Indian probably had the dangerous privilege of longest isolation from the rest of mankind. Medical historians guess that few of the first rank killers among the diseases are native to the Americas. .

It has often been suggested that the high mortality rates of these post-Columbian epidemics were due more to the brutal treatment of the Indians by the Europeans than to the Indians' lack of resistance to imported maladies. But the early chroniclers reported that the first epidemics following the arrival of the Old World peoples in a given area of the New World were the worst, or at least among the worst. European exploitation had not yet had time to destroy the Indians' health.³⁵

Like most Christians today, the people of Columbus' era faced the reality of death (which is not as imminent today) at every turn and every age. It was the solution to sickness. Thus, the religious life contributed proportionately to the vacuum of knowledge. Disease was only a natural component of life. It is one of the risks of life.

Thus, the Christian tradition brought with it a hope that extended beyond death - the promise of the resurrection from the dead.

The introduction of flora and fauna to a new environment introduces bacteria as well.

What is the problem? It is twofold. First, the environment into which the bacteria is introduced is hostile. The bacteria and the organisms have not learned to live together in a beneficial manner. For example, the small pox that Europeans could ward off because of their natural immunities to it could not be avoided by the native Americans because they did not have the immunity built into their systems.

Second, a bacteria can latch up with something else and result in something very undesirable.

³³Kathleen A. Deagan, "La Isabela, Foothold in the New World," National Geographic, January 1992, 48.

³⁴Crosby, The Columbian Exchange, 35.

³⁵Ibid., 37-39.

Bacteria are essential to the life system. They are largely responsible for decay and decomposition of organic matter, producing a cycling of such chemicals as carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulphur. A few bacteria obtain their food by means of photosynthesis, some are saprophytes, and others are parasites, causing disease in humans and other animals, plants, and other microorganisms.

Bacteria is an alien and can be either a friend or an enemy.

When God enters human history a dynamic occurs that creates an alienated situation. Jesus Christ is not considered the friend, but the disrupter. He risks discomfort because of the reaction people have to him.

When he states that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things Peter tells him that it is not necessary. Jesus responds, "Get behind me, Satan."

It is unrealistic to imagine any different response. Jesus talks about healing even on the sabbath. He forgives a person, and the healed man picks up his cot and goes away. He relates to the outsider, the outcast, the sinner. On and on. How do the people respond who watch what he is doing. "Who does he think he is? God?"

The way Jesus' life is described is with a cross, suffering and death. Jesus invites his followers to a similar way of life - a life of dis-ease, discomfort. This is not done for the sake of masochism. It is a reality that when one seeks to embrace the world and bring wellness, one is risking one's life, comforts, one's very being.

Jesus invites his disciples to take up the cross and follow him. What is the risk in this? Are we taking a chance of losing our lives, being defamed, experience separation from family and friends? But in the final analysis we risk the promise of the resurrection. Will God deliver on this promise?

Is there a chance of life after death? That is one risk of the resurrection. However, there is a more imminent risk. Is it possible in our day-to-day experiences that resurrections, new life, can be experienced in this realm? Is this not also the meaning of resurrection?

The Church is the resurrection community, the Church of the cross. It is an alien community that dares to celebrate an alien God who provides an alien righteousness (goodness) in the world.

One is enlisted into this in baptism. Baptism is the sacrament of incorporation into the church. It is the event of God's own initiative taking a person into God's self. But at the heart of the event is the participating with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6). It is to this point that Luther adds in his explanation of baptism that the Christian renews this experience by daily sorrow and repentance, and each day one is buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life with Christ.

The object of the Christian life has often been seen as bringing the Gospel to the heathen for their conversion, hoping for the reconciliation of Jerusalem, and awaiting the end of time. Columbus' religion has been characterized this way.³⁶

³⁶Eugene Lyon, "Search for Columbus," National Geographic, January 1992, 33.

The Christian religion is something different. It is cross bearing, risking disease and dis-ease, taking a chance a world can be restored and people can be reconciled to each other, the non-human world, and God. In the name of Christ the cross is borne by the members of the Christian community to make a change in the world.

CHAPTER 5

DISCOVERING THE HORSE

Of all the debates regarding Columbus and his discovery of America the one that seems least contested is that Columbus did not discover America.

It is now widely accepted that the Scandinavian Leif Eriksson briefly colonized what is now called Newfoundland in A.D. 1011. Other earlier arrivals may also have taken place. For example, the historian David Beers Quinn suggests that Englishmen arrived in 1481, a few years before Columbus. Other pre-Columbian ocean travelers surely discovered the American continents long before 1492, perhaps crossing the Pacific Ocean to do so.³⁷

If the word "discover" means to find something first, then the above statement is correct. However, the word "discover" has a different origin. It once meant that an object made itself known to the observer, it disclosed, revealed itself to the subject.

There is excitement when someone realizes something for oneself. We often use the word "discover" to describe that experience. Thus, we know a very personal side of the word. "Mother, let me do it myself" really means to let me find something out for myself, let me explore, let me "discover" it.

It is legitimate to say that Columbus "discovered" America, using the original meaning of the word. America revealed itself to him. It was there before he arrived. It flourished on its own. It had its own integrity.

As people have studied the artifacts of the Americas it has been disclosed from the fossil records what in fact was here long before Columbus. There is archaeological evidence of human communities dating back 20,000 to possibly 40,000 years ago. We have learned that horses were introduced by the Spaniards after Columbus. That is true. But horses had been on the American continent at an earlier time in history and became extinct. Horses existed in the Americas during the Pleistocene age 2 to 3 million years ago.³⁸

Discover has these two dimensions: The objective dimension is that the object which has been in existence all along reveals itself to the observer. The subjective dimension is the personal experience of the find. It is "mine." It is "for me." I

³⁷George P. Horse Capture, "An American Indian Perspective," in Seeds of Change, 193.

³⁸Deb Bennet and Robert S. Hoffmann, "Ranching in the New World," in Seeds of Change, 110.

claim it.³⁹


When we take Jesus Christ seriously we realize these same two dimension of discover. The words we use are a little different: grace and faith. When we realize who Jesus Christ is we learn that the Christ who makes himself known to us has a long history. He is not just another image to follow or a way to understand gaps in our knowledge. He is the Lord of history (dare we say all history, both human and non-human?) and has been ours for all time.


We also arrive at a conclusion that as finite and minuscule as I am, the Lordship of Christ is "for me." I am owned by him. I am claimed by him.


Grace is God's claim on us. Faith is our claim on God.


It is incredible what we learn if we renounce our bias views and open ourselves to discovery. Much more has happened than we acknowledge. In the realm of nature, of history, of society, and of God discovering needs to be our way of being open.


It is there to be discovered:

The  ing - God entering human history.

The  ing - the way God acts to restore the world.

The  - the very power of changing the world to good.

The  - the suffering borne by the followers of Christ to enhance the world.

The  - for me, God's empowerment of me to live openly with the world.

CONCLUSION

How does one want to feel about the Columbian Exchange and the joyous exchange?

There are two prevailing moods regarding the Columbian exchange. The first is expressed by Alfred Crosby.

The Columbian exchange has included man, and he has changed the Old and New Worlds sometimes inadvertently, sometimes intentionally, often brutally. It is possible that he and the plants and animals he brings with him have caused the extinction of more species of life forms in the last four hundred years than the usual processes of evolution might kill off in a million. Man kills faster than the pace of evolution: there has been no million years since Columbus for evolution to devise a replacement for the passenger pigeon. No one can remember what the pre-Columbian flora of the Antilles was like, and the trumpeter swan and the buffalo and a hundred other species have been reduced to such small numbers that a mere twitch of a change in ecology or man's wishes can eliminate them. The flora and the fauna of the Old and especially of the New World have been reduced and specialized by man. Specialization almost always narrows the

³⁹It is said of Columbus that he was offended when the governorship of the Americas was stripped from him. He felt he deserved the title because of his claim on the Americas.


possibilities for future changes: for the sake of present convenience, we look to the future.

The Columbian exchange has left us with not a richer but a more impoverished genetic pool. We, all of the life on this planet, are the less for Columbus, and the impoverishment will increase.⁴⁰

Weatherford draws a more positive, hopeful conclusion though he too despairs over the evil done in the process.

In the five hundred years since Columbus's voyage to America, the people of the world have benefitted greatly from the American Indians, but the world may have lost even more than it gained. . . . Sadly, however, we know much more about the building of the pyramids of Egypt, thousands of miles and years from us, than we know about the pyramid builders of the Mississippi. We know more about the language of the long-gone Hittites than we do about the still-living Quechua speakers descended from the Incas. We know more about the poetry of the ancient Chinese than about the poems of the Nahuatls. We can decipher the clay tablets of Mesopotamia better than we can the stone tablets of Mesoamerica. We understand the medical practices of ancient Babylon better than those of the living Dakotas. We understand more about the interbreeding of the Angles and the Saxons than we do about the mixing of the Indians in America with the European and African immigrants. We know more about the Greeks' mythological tribe of Amazons than we know about the dying Yuquis of the Amazon. The history and culture of America remains a mystery, still *terra incognita* after five hundred years.

Columbus arrived in the New World in 1492, but America has yet to be discovered.⁴¹

The ing of God into history changed the world. At the outset of this paper I stated that of all the events in history the words "joyous exchange" describe this most significant event. It also impacted the evil of the Columbian exchange. Hopefully, as these two exchanges are interfaced we will learn more and be more confident in the Cross of Christ.

Robert W. Bertram and Edward H. Schroeder have developed a Bible Study process called "Crossings" which incorporates personal experiences with Biblical texts.

⁴⁰Crosby, The Columbian Exchange, 219.

⁴¹Weatherford, op. cit., 255.