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V3H 3H6
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Dear Clark:

It has been years since I last was in touch with you and your family. Greetings to Dorothy and Sarah too!

I am writing as a result of having read your article in *ChristianWeek* alongside Jon Bonk's article. To come straight to the point, I am simply perplexed, and wanted to appeal to you for some help.

When I first came to Regent College, and met you, I had just returned from two years of evangelistic work in West Berlin where a very one-sided approach to the Gospel was taken. Then, thanks to you, I began volunteer work with M2/W2 (you recall Waldy Klassen, who still is director of that program). My career has been entirely criminal justice oriented since. I now serve as director of Victim Offender Ministries for MCC Canada. So I look to you as a real inspiration for what has since been a life's work.

More so though, I was encouraged by you, initially through the 1975 January interterm at Regent, to think far more holistically about my faith than I had ever dreamt. The title of the course was "The Politics of Jesus", and amongst others Richard Mouw and Jim Wallis came back to back. I was sent reeling by all that "strange" perspective on the Gospel. I came eventually however to understand that the "new creation" encompassed personal and sociopolitical dimensions as in II Cor. 5. That was my first "conversion". Second, thanks to your strong mentoring, I came to understand that Jesus' message and way were centrally those of peace and the cross. I came to understand his ethics in a wholly different light, similar to what the first generation of leadership in the Plymouth Brethren movement (my heritage) did, and several other restorationist movement leaders did, upon a fresh re-reading of Jesus.

I remember once talking for some time with John Yoder about your own "conversion" to a peace theology. He commented that he was so impressed by you since you had come to that position through a fresh reading of the Gospels.

My dilemma with you is: how, having read Jesus that way once, and having articulated it with power and passion (I know, since you were my primary mentor), have you come to read Jesus differently again? I am troubled and perplexed, Clark, at the eagerness with which you seem to disavow what once you so firmly upheld - - with a rather disdainful mention that only a minority hold to such views (as if the faith throughout history has not always overwhelmingly been a minority, in fact a minority within a minority). I remember well your teaching the book of Galatians. From that book's cue, I feel like asking: "Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified." But then I'd go on: Having begun with the cross, do we now

embrace the gun - - in spite of Paul's words: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world."?

I have enclosed a few things I recently have written: one a meditation for an upcoming issue of a newsletter I am doing jointly with Howard Zehr, my American counterpart, on the linkages between war and prison; another a brief review of a new book by Millard Lind. I thought I'd also enclose copies of two brief articles I have recently read concerning the effects on Iraqi children. Doubtless you have read similar material. Finally, I have enclosed a draft of a longer paper I wrote and am preparing for publication on a Christian response to crime.

Can you please, Clark, as my former mentor, tell me where you believe I have gone wrong in my reading of Jesus? I wonder if you would have some time to get together with me while you are out to teach this Summer, possibly over supper or lunch, to discuss that question - - and to renew acquaintances?

The following two quotes focus my perspective on reading the Bible. Please show me where you believe the perspective is faulty:

But the more radical implications of this hermeneutical principle to which the Anabaptists called attention were overlooked by Luther and have often been overlooked or forgotten since his time. It is not a matter of merely adding the new to the old as a kind of climax and fulfillment but of fundamentally reinterpreting the prophetic tradition in light of its unexpected 'fulfillment'. Indeed, if Jesus was to be considered the fulfillment, the first-century Jewish - - and indeed, the present century also - - interpretation had to be revised, as Paul came to realize (Phil. 3:7 - 8).

To say that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of the Hebrew history and Bible already means that Christians are reading it as preface to Christ. They are interpreting it as a preliminary statement which is now understood in light of Jesus' coming. Thus for Christians the Hebrew Bible has become the Old Testament - - a historical record of types and shadows that must be understood in light of the archetype. Its definitions and regulations, while pointing in the right direction, must be corrected and interpreted in light of the new reality revealed in Jesus.

An understanding of this relation between the new and the old is important because it affects our theological methodology and thus our interpretation of Jesus and his mission. While we continue to recognize the Old Testament's importance as the historical hermeneutical context for Jesus, we do not begin with its view of God and creation as the definitive criterion for interpreting the meaning of incarnation.....

If we begin with a concept of the Logos of God as it is revealed in Jesus, then a passage like John 1:1 - 5, rather than Genesis 1 - 2, becomes our norm for

understanding the word of God in creation. We do not discard Genesis, but inasmuch as Jesus is the `Word of God' and the true `image of God', we interpret the Genesis story in light of the revelation which has come in him....

When the incarnate Word is identified with the word of creation, we learn that creation is also an act of grace. Thus the word of creation should be understood as an invitation of grace rather than a command of law. (*Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective*, C. Norman Kraus, pp 84 & 85, 106.)

Most theologians distinguish in some deep way between creation and redemption. For example, according to Martin Luther in classical Protestantism, or Emil Brunner or H. Richard Niebuhr in recent times, creation and redemption have two different sets of ethical implications. If you derive your value system from creation, you will, for instance, defend the state, which is an institution of creation. If you derive your guidance from redemption alone, then the teachings and example of Jesus can be normative for you, which may lead to nonresistance. But you only have the right to draw nonresistant conclusions from the teachings of Jesus if you admit that the realm of creation is governed by other laws and other authorities. In other words, Jesus speaks for God all right, as did the prophets before him, but God also has other distinct channels through which he has said other distinct things, which we may perceive by using other modes of hearing God, such as the reasonable analysis of the Word that is in creation.

It is thus not simply a speculative difference, but a very concrete one, when the apostolic generation responsible for this text [John 1:1 - 18] and its parallels insisted that what is known in Jesus is precisely the same, in authority and in meaning, as what underlies creation.... He has not revealed a different purpose or character through creation than what we now encounter through Jesus....

The way the Creator WORD came among us was not in dignity and effectiveness but in weakness, suffering, and defeat....

God has the same shape as Jesus, and he always has had. The cross is what creation is all about. What Jesus did was local, of course, because that is how serious and real our history is to God. But what the cross was locally is universally and always the divine nature.

(*He Came Preaching Peace*, John Howard Yoder, pp 82, 83 & 85)

That kind of teaching "turns my crank" as it did when I first was exposed to it through you, Clark.

I hope there is an opportunity to get together this Summer.

Thanks, Clark.

Sincerely

Wayne Northey

P.S. I'll also enclose our family form letter.

P.P.S. Also, I have become fascinated by the work of René Girard in relation to violence. I'll enclose a paper submitted to us for publication which applies Girard's thought to criminal justice [found here: <http://m2w2.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Issue-131.pdf>], and a copy of an article by R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, drawn with approbation to my attention by C.F.D. Moule in personal correspondence. I would be very interested in your response to that material.