

Advancing Nonviolence Session 5: Christology

pp.151-170; from 'The powers, through created for good, have fallen', up until 'Pneumatology'.

Overview of Session

- Last session looked at Jesus in NT – Jesus' teachings/practices of NV
 - This session look, in more depth at theological themes within Christology
 - Incarnation
 - Crucifixion
 - Resurrection
 - Sin and Salvation
 - Start by time to reflect on journey so far
 - Then overview of themes
 - Group discussion
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Reflections

- Anything that was struck you about nonviolence/violence since our last meeting? Any new insights/reflections you would like to share?
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Context:

When thinking about Christology, useful to think about background context/theological thinking on sin/salvation to see why incarnation etc. so significant.

See with concept of the Fall, that humanity turns away from living in way that God intended them to, and that this also causes corruption on the social, and environmental, level, as individual sins coalesce into structural sins – roots of social injustice.

ANV talks about this in terms of a fall away from peace and harmony, and towards violence and social division. Means divisions through tribes or nations, rather than global solidarity, as well as division between humanity and the earth – leads to relationships of competition/dominance/violence and struggle. All these formally harmonious relationships, interpersonal, structural, environmental etc. distorted - essentially, impacts of the Fall reaches and corrupts all dimensions of social life, economic, political etc. pp.151-2.

Therefore, ANV, see NV as challenging sinful social structures, and aiming towards living as intended for humanity before the Fall p.152.

Christology:

Christology = Who is Jesus? What is relationship between Jesus and God?

Questions of sin/salvation/how humans are meant to live = theological context that essential in understanding thinking on Christology. Also important to consider why Christological ideas such as Incarnation etc. matter, rather than just seeing Jesus as 'good person'/ 'exemplar of NV practice'. Here, draw out Christology and implications for NV, then discuss significance in groups.

Incarnation:

- Jesus as fully human and fully divine – unites humanity and God. Greatest affirmation of God's love for humanity – that God's Son becomes human – and reveals how God intended humanity to be/live. Affirms human dignity, as God cares enough about humanity to save us, even our enemies – means that all should be treated in accordance with human dignity/idea of seeing Christ in the other.
- Also see God entering the world as vulnerable – born in barn to poor parents p.153 – no status p.156. See consistently in Gospel narratives Jesus as reaching out to the poor/oppressed/marginalized/outcast – subverting ideas of division e.g. who is clean or unclean/worthy or unworthy – and siding with those that the world rejects e.g. the poor, e.g. riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, in contrast to Pilate riding in on war horse. = Option for the poor – start from their perspective, as those who suffer most from injustice and violence p.170. Seeing Christ in the poor/oppressed.
- Incarnation also affirming goodness of the world – the fact that God become embodied shows the goodness of the world and creation. Shows we are called to act in the world rather than retreat from it.

Crucifixion and Resurrection:

- Passion/Crucifixion key to Christ's mission of salvation through the reconciliation of humanity to God. See God's love for the whole of humanity, for whom God's only son died, suffered, willingly.
- NV exemplified in the Crucifixion - violence encountered in the world, is met with the unconditional, nonviolent love of God.¹ Christ killed by powerful/imperial authorities – given shameful death. Knows will be put

¹ 2017 World Day of Peace

to death and does not fight back – not about violently opposing empire/laws of the world – encountering violence with NV (love/forgiveness/mercy). Responds with forgiveness, rather than revenge p.159.

- Subverts logic of world/violence – challenges ‘myth of redemptive violence’ p.163 to challenge enemies/produce peace. Links to work of Rene Girard – idea of mimetic theory: idea that societies use scapegoating as way to contain violence – unite around idea that victim is deserving of punishment/builds social cohesion – BUT Jesus challenges this – sinless victim/one that interconnected to everyone as victim is God pp.153-4.
 - Here see cross as witness to power of NV: ANV – example of centurion seeing death of Jesus proclaiming ‘Surely this man was the Son of God’ (Mark 15:39) p.163.
 - Also act of solidarity with those who suffer – God being in true solidarity with humanity. Links to solidarity with the ‘crucified’ of today pp.163-4.
 - Also offer of ‘hope in the justice of God’ given to those suffering, by the resurrection. God’s response to violence – affirms violence ‘not the destiny of humanity’ – shows that ‘God is capable of transforming the injustice that creates victims’ p.164.
 - Offer of salvation/liberation from sin i.e. that which causes division. Cross and Resurrection as reconciliation of humanity to God –and reconciliation with each other. Showing power of forgiveness and mercy, that subverts logic of revenge/escalation. Challenges traditional ideas of “justice” as getting what one deserves – as salvation offered to underserving. No exclusion in this offer of salvation, no notion of enemy - a sense of solidarity with the whole human family that shares in the new life of Christ.² (Links to Nagler – V what divides/stops unity – NV what draws towards unity).
 - Kazu Haga - nonviolence is ‘part of a process of healing our collective wounds’,³ and the redemption that Christ offers to humanity can also be understood in such a way.
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Questions:

- How do you see Christology as impacting NV?

² Cahill.

³ Gospel of Nonviolence. Kazu Haga, Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm, Parallax Press, 2020.

- Do Christological doctrines e.g. the incarnation, make a difference socially/politically? To how we think about NV?
 - Would it be the same if we saw Jesus as a human exemplar of NV rather than God?
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Discipleship:

- Within theologies of NV, see world as renewed through the redemption of Christ, and therefore, a new mode of engagement is made possible.
- ANV: JC as inaugurating Kingdom of God - challenges laws of the world, built on division/violence, and instead built on primordial peace. Peace that Jesus gives/leaves to disciples and the world (John 14:27) - see in resurrection appearance - Emmaus.
- In John 13:35 Jesus states - 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another'. How we treat the other = marker of Christian living.
- Discipleship as being called to live in particular way/bear witness to it p.157. NV as spirituality and spiritual practice.
- ANV gives example of Romero: 'witnessing to Christ the peacemaker' p.167 through life challenging injustice and violence in El Salvador - up until martyrdom.

Dorothy Day/CWM: Why Christology matters:

"Our Father" and "Thy Kingdom come" - Day saw herself as called to act as if truly believed message of a universal family and the coming Reign of God. Day: "We are trying to say with action, 'Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven'. We are working for a Christian social order" (in Cornell and Forest, *Penny a Copy*, [1995], 43).

Baptist theologian, James William McClendon Jr. - Dorothy Day as embodying a Resurrection ethic - interrupts history/forming an ethic 'that could not have been but for the resurrection fact'⁴ - only made possible, and only makes sense, if the resurrection is acknowledged as fact.

Law of God/not law of the world - Day - September 1936 column in *The Catholic Worker*: 'We are Personalists because we oppose the vesting of all

⁴ McClendon, *Ethics*, 245.

authority in the hands of the state instead of in the hands of Christ the King'.⁵

- Human dignity – all treated in accordance – solidarity with marginalized: Hospitality and community - the person of Christ directly encountered. Day - 'You only love God as much as the one who you love the least' - seeing Christ as present in the other; 'they are Christ, asking us to find room for Him'.
- Resistance to empire/violence/militarism – universal human family in Christ - Day: "We are all members, one of another. Where the health of one member suffers, the health of the entire body is lowered" (The Catholic Worker [1962] 7). "When we pray with Christ...we realize Christ as our Brother. We think of all men as our brothers then, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. "We are all members, one of another," and, remembering this, we can never be indifferent to the social miseries and evils of the day. The dogma of the Mystical Body has tremendous social implications."

Questions:

Consider the two quotes below from Romero and Pope Benedict. How do these challenge common understandings of Jesus' mission/Christology? What would this mean for Christian discipleship?

Pope Benedict: Peace... "was not only a greeting. It was a gift... but at the same time it is a consignment" (quoted p.160).

Romero: "It is very easy to be servants of the word without disturbing the world: a very spiritualised word, a word without any commitment to history, a word that can sound in any part of the world because it belongs to no part of the world. A word like that creates no problems, starts no conflicts" (Lent Sermon 4, quoted p.159).

Quotations:

p.153 'Jesus taught and lived nonviolence. His death on the cross indicates a willingness on the part of God to suffer violence rather than deal it out. His resurrection shows that violence does not have the final word, and that revenge is not on God's agenda. The entire drama of the incarnation and the redemption operates with a nonviolent logic of kenosis; rather than use power to overcome

⁵ Quoted in Zwick, 'Introduction', *On Pilgrimage*, 22.

resistance coercively, God empties Godself and turns the logic of power on its head, absorbing the violence of the world rather than perpetuating the cycle of retribution’.

p.164 ‘The crucifixion and resurrection reveal at once the tragedy of the victims and the hope in the justice of God. The violence exerted on the crucified peoples is a cry that rises to heaven and the resurrection is the confirmation that the cry has been heard and the suffering redeemed by the action of God’.