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INTRODUCTION

Christian episodes are complete in a detailed literature with significant names and dates during the history of Christianity, significant events to picture, coming from where all the versions of the Christian faith are provided in both heresy and truth. Nevertheless, the following lectures are just sermons in the Spirit of Christianity that is neither thinking historically nor triangulated, but scriptural. They move beyond the interest of narrative, of telling and hearing tales, to an intrinsic, spiritual value.

Realizing that a very polluted political and religious picture was going on throughout Christian history, persecutions, and a lot of difficulties and atrocities; in addition, ecumenical councils, reforms, crusades, and schisms happened; and, the separation between church and state, and many brothers and sisters separated from their religious backgrounds and beliefs practices, the kernel of these lectures is the predestined grace of the Spirit of God – the only and true church – since before the creation of the world and after its final days.

Knowing that these lectures may be analyzed as a perfunctory explanation from the view point of a historian, they invoke an understanding of a Christian responsibility of raising substantial issues about the role of the church in a pluralistic post-modern world that is more *spiritual* than historical or theological. To make a long story short, in three lectures, the church has failed to see itself as the *body of Christ* in a world that has always been pluralistic and Trinitarian in the Spirit of the Lord God Jesus Christ.

LECTURE I: SERMON ABOUT “IT IS FINISHED”

The human capacity to do good and evil is unpredictable. Both relate to the interplay of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ, as interpreted by his followers. In the words of Jesus Christ: “It is finished.” In the words of Martin Marty, “Believers have told simple parables and devised complex dogmas, waged wars and made peace, engage in acts of mercy or justice and acted unmercifully or unjustly.”¹ In my own words, the beginning of Christianity in the first thousand years of church history has created a vicious circle of excommunication, intolerance, condemnation, death, iconoclasm, controversy, persecution, fear, and imperialism that confirms the post-modern cultural manifestation of a faith that has killed *the body of Christ* on the cross, since Jesus of Nazareth was crucified.

The *Christian world* that Marty calls, “another world to live in,” is a new heaven and a new earth to live in preservation – “whether we expect ever to pass wholly over into it or no”² -- as a new meaning of having a religion. A self-fulfilling prophesy in true believers with perceptions of Christian reality -- without ignoring being realistic -- deserves realistic expectations in the richness of the promise: the kingdom of Jesus in not of this world.

The history of Christianity is a story for spiritually-mature people that become like little children. This scriptural idea is terrific in its innocence and “the most terrifying ever heard by human ears,” paraphrasing the modern French novelist Georges Bernanos. Hence the question: “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

¹ Martin Marty, *the Christian World* (New York, the Random House Publishing Group, 2009), xiii.

² Marty, 4.

The consistency taught by Jesus, his “special” character, was what was debated then, and is now: was he a trouble maker, a Jew teacher, a wise man, a charismatic faith healer, the son of God, the Messiah? To understand who Jesus really was and the historical reliability of the Gospels and its sources and the relationship of the Gospels to one another, honest believers must interpolate the secondhand knowledge about Christ in self-examination of his presence in their life: they need to be him, recover the faith of Jesus, his state of mind, and be a part of his body. For Bultmann a “faith which needed the external props of historical research into the life of Jesus was simply not faith.”³

So to speak, no one is free of worldviews or presuppositions about who Jesus was. A faithful believer rather prefers to be naïve or ignorant or innocent in his introspection about that time, rather than support different theological implications or political agendas that account of the life of the “real Jesus” -- like pale reflections of another’s researcher himself. A faithful believer discovers Jesus in Jesus himself. It is a time for reappraisal and fresh approaches in a Christian heart. Obviously, twenty centuries of lost history in Christianity have nothing more to contribute to serious discussion on the life and teachings of Jesus; although, they may be useful for understanding divergent religious movements of all times after Jesus’ self-sacrifice for humanity – a worthy exercise to minimize the potential for conflict among faiths.

LECTURE II: SERMON ABOUT “THE NEW CHURCH OR NEW JERUSALEM”

After Jesus expired on the cross, his breath was dispersed as the Diaspora of a multiple acts of creation that distilled in drops of his blood the redemption and

³ Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *the Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 113.

purification of all the created. To distill the meaning of Christianity – as living water – in a world that has won God’s favor, Christians have to live what it means to be the *body of Christ* in a world that is not a Christian home.

First Fathers of the church such as Tertullian, Justine, and Marcion; all the teachers of the ancient church such as Irenaeus Lyons, Clement and Origen of Alexandria; emperors as Constantine of Constantinople; scholars as Augustine of Hippo and Ambrose of Milan; the reformers in the Middle Ages such as Ignatius of Loyola, Martin Luther, and John Calvin; monasticism in the Catholic Saints such as Francis of Assisi, John of the Cross, and Theresa of Avila; protestants such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Phoebe Palmer; and many others saints and sinners individuals, who converted to the Christian faith, have encapsulated the *Doctrine of Recapitulation* in the ethic of love of a God who left the splendor of heaven, becoming nothing on a cursed cross for the sake of humanity, that one day all can go and be like him and with him.

According to Marty, “The first conflicts erupted when Jews forced followers of Jesus Christ out of the synagogues because they could not share belief that he was the Messiah.”⁴ The eschatological Spirit began to move out of the cursed cross in Jerusalem, and was able to live with the expectation that history would soon end, touching and teaching believers to obey everything that he have commanded – remembering that he will always be with them, to the end of the age. The Great one global-God ethical Commission was institutionalized from the beginning to the end as Christianity.

Interaction with other religions in a political turmoil of power and ambition tempted the incipient Christian church from its roots of Judaism, and mixed alliances with Roman state power in the west, and eastern prelates to “confront real diversity of thought, with

⁴ Marty, *the Christian World*, 20.

daring mystical and theological speculations.”⁵ The church’s universality is through the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God Jesus. The church has operated between persecution and tolerance in multiple cultures and languages in Asia, Africa, Europe, and America as a confusion of tongues; multiple imperialist powers, emperors, and political leaders; churches, monasteries, synagogues, mosques, and places of worship; popes, bishops, monks, priests, and church thinkers; and significant faiths traditions of human experience, and culture.

Geographically, the entire world has embraced the Christian message. Global faith and intercultural contact have formed world religions where one and another’s faith is affected, reshaped, and transformed. Jenkins is emphatic that “Christianity has no choice but to engage in dialogue with several other world religions.”⁶ The defense of the *pearl of the true faith* is a “monument of civilized, intelligent religious exchange,”⁷ which eliminates any disregard of internal and external reality, confusion or barrier among people, with a glossolalia of beliefs, doctrines, and religious denominations.

An autistic behavior upon Christian reality – the reality that the true church has died and resurrected with Jesus Christ; the reality of a leaderless church that has lost Jesus Christ; the reality of salvation in a pluralistic post-modern world -- has divided the world between multiethnic churches centered in Jerusalem, Constantinople, Baghdad, Rome, Moscow, or another city in China, India, France, or Latin America, to name a few. The geographical shift away from any place on the planet has cultural and political implications, “in that no region, no church, can claim special authenticity or authority on the basis of representing the historic core [or present condition] of the Christian

⁵ Philip Jenkins, *the Lost History of Christianity* (New York, Harper Collins, 2008), 9.

⁶ Jenkins, 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

tradition.”⁸ The evangelical and catholic Spirit that has shifted the church’s center of gravity is already translated to *a new heaven and a new earth* with the Jesus’ glory through his prevenient grace.

Christianity has spent two thousand years in bloody efforts – a terrible history of persecution, crusades, inquisitions, intolerance, corruption, and obscurantism -- to reclaim the home of their faith that has always been on the cross in that time of Jerusalem. In the mean time of fruitless struggles among Christians and with other faiths – especially Islam that has spread in the same geographical way and with the same violence – the Christian center of gravity has always been in a pure and contrite crucified heart.

Dehumanization and dechristianization are not considered in Christian history. This extinction of humanity and its churches is related to the eschatological message of the sacred books of major world’s religions. Christianity navigates in the flooded stream where all religious denominations are adrift, as in Noah’s times. Jenkins seems frustrated looking for the mainstream of religious life, the most active, productive, lively line of thought or belief when affirms, “ Neither faith, nor piety, nor scholarship nor ancient tradition, [councils, reformations, and creeds], served to keep the churches alive across most of their ancient homelands, a great extinction that should offer a sobering message to modern-day believers.”⁹

⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁹ Ibid., 28.

LECTURE III: SERMON ABOUT “THE REVERSE OSMOSIS OF CREATION”

Paraphrasing John (1: 1-2) -- in a spiritual translation of his text, using my own words and imagination, that Christians let me to say, “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God. [Jesus] was with God in the beginning, [and his church was with God, and his church was God].” The predestined church or *body of Christ or new humanity* elevates John Calvin to a higher scholar reputation in church’s reformation. His *self-talk theology* is what makes the Christian Spirit alive in Christianity today. Even though the doctrine of predestination is considered as an inflammatory theological work, biblical evidence is cogent in passages as the unity in Christ in Ephesians (1: 3-14; 2: 19-22), and the Jesus’ vision for the church in John (17: 20-25).

Coping with the death of the church as a new beginning, a new humanity, a new heaven and a new earth created on the cross, the reverse osmosis of creation is going in purification, sanctification, glorification, and perfection to a “beginning that is, strictly, at a point out of time,” in the words of Charles Williams. A fresh, new word defines the opposite of holocaust; a new Christian modeling behavior refreshes the pejorative meaning of words like religion, fundamentalism, sermon, and love; and, one global-God ethics reconciles our glossolalia of beliefs, doctrines, and religious denominations far from chance or randomness, meaning or survival, “in the workings of subtler forms of divine intervention that we cannot immediate understand” -- diminishing the historical process that seems bizarre and puzzling: “a theology of extinction.”¹⁰

In my final words, with the words of Marty, “the ecumenical movement and the contemporary interfaith endeavors are now available to help lessen tensions based in

¹⁰ Ibid., 249.

religious rivalries;”¹¹ so, the concept and reality of one global-God ethical Christianity must see its faith to gain a worldwide reach today without overlooking common challenges for all religions.

¹¹ Marty, *the Christian World*, 233.