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Cosmic, Communitarian and Kenotic Dimensions of the New Man in Christ

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It is an inadequate theology that leads to a false anthropology and a malevolent economics. Any theology which is not Trinitarian is inadequate or one-sided and will be cancelled by an opposite theology of a contemporary or a successor. Hence Sankara's *Kevaladvaita* is cancelled by Ramanuja's *Visishtadvaita* and Madhwa's *Dvaita vada*. Every man including Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa, and humble mortals like this writer is under *maya* and so no man can discover God as He is unless God reveals Himself to us by a *kenosis* or kenotic incarnation. If Jesus Christ is not the absolute, final unrepeatable and only perfect revelation of perfect God and perfect man, we are all like the proverbial blind men who saw the elephant as each could feel it partially. Emil Brunner is right when he says that only through God can God be known. If God had not revealed Himself as One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, no one would have discovered such a paradoxical theology which unites in one God the totality of existence and essence without omitting singularity or plurality, unity or fellowship and the actuality of eternal love in eternal action. Sankara has at least logic on his side when he teaches that Brahman is *nirguna*. Islamic Allah also ought to be *nirguna* if Islam is logical about God.

Christianity has no greater revelation than 'God is love'. God did not exist once just with potential love and then create angels and men to actualize His love. Such a growing God cannot be God. An eternal Monad cannot be love in eternal action. Love is inadequate if it has only the *giving* and *receiving* capabilities of a couple without the *sharing* of their common love in a child. Love does not have a fourth dimension. The 360 degrees of a circle can be divided into four hundred or more divisions without increasing the degrees. God the Supreme Mind is eternal conation in the Father, eternal cognition in the Son and eternal affection in the Holy Spirit. God is an eternal Nuclear Family consisting of God the Father, Christ the Son and Holy Spirit the Mother in which the three centres are actually one centre of the Family. In an ideal family, none is selfish or jealous. The principle of circum-incession or coinherence is discernible even in our imperfect earthly families including those of the animals. What the Fathers of the Church spoke of as one *ousia* (essence) and three *hypostases* is too philosophical for us the practical and earth-bound people to understand.

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Hence it is better today to speak of one Nuclear Family and three members of the family in each of whom the other two members are always hidden. The love of a good family is *agape* and not *eros*. There is self-giving love in every member of the family.

1. The Imago Dei

Genesis 1:27 is one of the profoundest texts of the whole Bible revealing the true nature of God and man. In the creation story singularity and plurality are seen in God and in man. The writers of the saga of creation were writing more than what they knew as human beings. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit to teach certain eternal truths about God. 'And God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.' 'And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he *him*, male and female created he *them*.' Although the doctrine of Trinity is not to be seen in the 'let us make man', God is not performing the act of creation as an exclusive monad. Even if He was consulting the angels as the writers of the saga understood the creation event, the creation is done in fellowship and as the sovereign act of God. Similarly, the human being is both a *him* and a *them*. The image of God is in Adam and in Eve and in the bond between the two. 'It is not good that the man should be alone' (Gen. 2:18). This is because God is not a monad. He is a co-being Being and man also should be a co-being being. Paul Tillich is right in asserting that personality is individualization by participation. Kamala the wolf-child could not participate with human beings and her participation with wolves made her also wolf-like. The first man created was not created alone, but in participation with Eve. Even in the second creation story which is centuries older than the first, Adam could name all the sub-human species but was homesick and tired as he could not find a helpmate among all the animals and fowls he named. 'And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man"' (Gen. 2:22f.). The next verse gives the psychological truth that man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. Gregory of Nazianzus has given the analogy of Adam, Eve and Seth for the Blessed Trinity.¹ The

¹ 'What was Adam? A creature of God. What then was Eve? A fragment of the creature. And what was Seth? The begotten of both. Does it then seem to you that Creature and Fragment and Begotten are the same thing? Of course it does not. But were not these persons consubstantial? Of course they were. Well then, here is an acknowledged fact that different persons may have the same substance. I say this not that I would attribute creation or fragment or any property of body to the Godhead (let none of your contenders for a word be down upon me again), but that I may contemplate in these, as on a stage, things that are objects of thought alone. For it is not possible to trace out any image exactly to the whole extent of truth. But they say, what is the meaning of all this? For is not the one an offspring and the other a something else of the One? Did not both Eve and Seth come from one

image of God is Trinitarian and man in his perfection is trinitarian. The debate as to whether personal freedom or social justice is prior is a futile debate as the one does not exist without the other. In all the capitalist countries where they are obsessed with human rights, personal freedom and so on, they are primarily concerned about their own freedom and not the freedom of the unemployed to work where they want to work. We cannot speak of the freedom of the black marketeers and the freedom of the exploiters for no country would give freedom to robbers and thieves. Freedom is the birthright of the divine and not of the demonic people. The divine freedom given to man in creation is the freedom of a family to live for each other and not that of a selfish person to live for himself.

The beastly family is instinctive and temporary, the human family is sentimental and permanent, modelled on the Eternal Family of the Godhead which is divine. The new man in Christ is capable of manifesting the spirituality and permanence of the Heavenly Family outside his physical family also, in the Church which is the spiritual community and in the Brotherhood or Sisterhood around the Eucharistic Table. This is possible only for man created in the image of God and not for the sub-human species.

Another aspect of the image of God is its cosmic potentiality in each person. Man is a microcosm capable of communion with God the Macrocosm and the whole cosmos. As the Fall has defaced the image of God in man he has become narrow, parochial, selfish and beastly. Abel accompanied Cain in love because of the *imago Dei* in him, but Cain killed him due to the Fall. Seth was the type of the New Man. Noah the New Man survived whereas the disobedient children of Cain were punished in the Deluge. The old humanity is perishing from age to age because of hatred and class-structures. The new humanity stands for universal brotherhood, a classless society, the sharing of resources with the needy and a cosmic brotherhood centred around Jesus Christ.

Kenosis is the natural expression of love, which is the dominant aspect of the image of God. Babel is the symbol of self-exaltation resulting in scattering and Pentecost is the opposite of it due to the descent of the Holy Spirit and the consequent gathering of many races into one *ecclesia*. The greatness of man is not only in his horizontal universality but also in his verticality of self-emptying to serve the neediest and the consequent exaltation which God gives to His servants.

Adam? And were they both begotten by him? No; but one was a fragment of him and the other was begotten by him. And yet the two were one and the same thing, both were human beings; no one will deny that. Will you then give up your contention against the Spirit, that He must be either altogether begotten, or else cannot be con-substantial, or be God; and admit from human examples the possibility of our position? I think it will be well for you unless you are determined to be very quarrelsome and to fight against what is proved by demonstration,' *Five Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus* V. 11.

Jesus Christ is both the prototype and antetype of the *Imago Dei*. 'He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in every thing he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to him all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross' (Col. 1:15-20). This great passage shows the communitarian, cosmic and kenotic aspects of the Incarnation. Christ, the Image of God, beckons us 'Follow me' and if we listen to Him and imitate Him, He will use us to reconcile the world to Him and even to hold all things together in Him. 'If any one is in Christ he is a new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17). The New Man in Christ will be an extension of the Incarnation, a Christ-like means of salvation for this fragmented and dilapidated world of ours.

2. The Communitarian Man in the Lord's Prayer

'Our Father. . .' is the prayer of the New Man in Christ who forgets to use the first person singular as he is no more an isolated monad. God is the Father of all by virtue of creation and redemption. It is significant that after three petitions for God's glory, there are four petitions for the four basic needs of the whole of humanity, namely provision, pardon, protection and preservation. 'Give us this day our daily bread' is the prayer for material and spiritual provisions for the whole of humanity. We are not allowed to pray for daily cake as there are no resources in the world for providing luxury for the four billion people on this small earth. Therefore, we are to pray to God our Heavenly Father, who is the real Owner of all the provisions of the whole world, to divide all the bread of all the world for all the people of all the world and supply to us our due share alone. It is equally important that we do not ask for yearly provisions, but are satisfied with daily bread and have no anxiety about the morrow. How can we be indifferent to the starving millions of today and keep provisions for ourselves for the morrow if we consider the starving humanity as our own brothers and sisters? We are taught to address God as 'Our Father' and not as 'our Grandfather' as if there are cousins among us. The world is to be a nuclear family in the model of God, the Nuclear Family. The image of God shared by all is paralleled by the Stoics who taught that all share the same Logos. Those reborn in baptism have no excuse for not practising universal brotherhood as they ought to realize what others may not have realized. Hence it is criminal on the part of the followers of the Nazarene to enjoy luxurious life-styles in a world of poverty, squalor and hunger. After all, no one earns wealth or even lives on earth by his own efforts alone. The food we eat, the clothes we put on, the vehicles in which we travel, the roads on which we walk are all the fruit of the labour of society at large. Hence we have an obligation to society. The only right way to look at human beings is to view them

as our direct brothers and sisters. The only right way to look at the wealth of the world is to see it as the wealth of God the Father. The only right way of using the resources of the Father is by sharing it with all His children. The half truth of Capitalism is belief in the Fatherhood of God without the counterpart of the brotherhood of man and the half truth of Communism is believing in the brotherhood or comradeship of humanity without the counterpart of belief in God. Those of us who claim to be Christians, who have been taught by the Son of God to address God as 'Our Father. . .' have not yet regarded our fellowmen as members of one nuclear family and so we do not pray the prayer with its deep meaning. 'Ask. . . seek. . . knock. . .' These commandments of Christ are urging us to do something for the petitions we submit orally to God. If we pray for daily bread for all, we have also to seek ways and means of providing daily bread for all the people of this earth. Let us also have a guilty conscience about our selfish accumulation of wealth and comfortable houses and costly food in the family of God, seeing our loved ones without a house to live in and a square meal to satisfy their hunger. We have converted the proletarian prayer of the Church into a bourgeois prayer of worldly people. There is a big gulf between our prayer and lives.

The second petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,' is more communitarian than the first. It is the only petition with a conditional clause. Vertical blessing of divine forgiveness is based on the horizontal forgiveness extended to the members of the family. The commandment in the Sermon on the Mount to love our enemies and to feed them while they are hungry and to give them drink while they are thirsty is the command to regard enemies also as the members of one nuclear family, irrespective of their attitude towards us. The elder prodigal in the story of the prodigal son remains outside the home when the story ends, as he could not regard the younger prodigal as his own brother. The father, on the other hand, loves both the prodigals and leaves the door open for both. He could forgive both because love had become his second nature. We are to love the righteous and the wicked as the sun sheds its light on the good and the evil. God shows no partiality. We must beware of narrow and selfish communitarianism which is called communalism. India can be won for Christ only by outgoing love that embraces all without distinction of caste, colour or creed, as Our Lord Himself loved all, including the Pharisees and the Publicans, the Jews and the Gentiles, the rich and the poor. His utterances of 'Woe unto you. . .' must not be taken as showing a lack of love towards them, but as the warning that a father gives to his children. The forgiveness that He gave to the woman caught in adultery was a revolutionary approach in His days. But it was such love that could win enemies to be friends and pray for his crucifiers while hanging on the cross. The forgiveness that Christ extends to us is eternal and unconditional, but we cannot appropriate it unless we have a receptive mood of forgiveness to our own enemies. The prayer is not 'as we forgive our immediate neighbours', but as we forgive all those who trespass against us. There is the need of forgiving our distant enemies also. This is the cosmic

dimension of the second petition in the Lord's prayer. Furthermore, it is a prayer for mission in the whole world. The sins of the whole of humanity are to be forgiven by the gracious Lord as we identify ourselves with the Church and the world when we pray this prayer as members of the family of God. The kenotic dimension of this prayer is in our ready self-humiliation in forgiving others and seeking the forgiveness of those against whom we have offended. We seek the forgiveness of our brethren as servants in the parable of the prodigal son. Humility is the queen of all virtues. Reconciliation between God and man is possible with the precondition of reconciliation of the devotee with other human beings.

The next two petitions for protection from temptation and preservation from the tempter are also in the first person plural and so communitarian and cosmic. The incessant temptation to which we are often liable to succumb in a family is the temptation to be selfish. A family is the best area on earth where none is selfish. 'A house that is divided in itself cannot stand.' In an ideal home the father lives and works to feed the mother and the children, the mother works for the husband and the kids, and the children for their parents. 'Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep' (Rom. 12:15) is a commandment for the solidarity of a home wherein alone it is possible to obey it. 'Love your neighbour as yourself' is the second of the twin commandments to regard the neighbour as a member of the nuclear family of God.

'Deliver us from the Evil One' is a petition to preserve us in the unity and joy of the Paradise to which we are redeemed by the Second Adam. Satan is the tempter instilling doubt in the Word of God, encouraging the plucking of the forbidden fruit, expelling us from the joy of fellowship with God and our fellowmen and instigating us to kill our brothers out of jealousy. Ultra-individualism is the result of the selfishness which Satan creates in us. But the fallen man under the sway of Satan has a communitarianism in fallenness, which shares the sinful tendency with his dearest and nearest. 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons' (Gen. 3:6f.). This is exactly what a drunkard does when he shares his drinks with his friends and an adulterer does in making others also adulterers. The communitarianism of the old man is not kenotic or cosmic, but ambitious and class-structured. The result is the scattering experience of Babel or the suicidal experience of the Deluge. We perish in the communitarianism of the Mafia of violence and robbery or save others and ourselves in the *koinonia* of the Church.

3. Is Salvation Personal or Ecclesial and Cosmic?

The concept of personal salvation has wrought unimaginable havoc in the Church and the world. To the advocates of personal salvation,

Jesus Christ is the Saviour of a few individuals who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour and not the Saviour of the world. They have chosen a few proof texts from here and there in the Bible, forgetting the main thrust of the biblical revelation about the soteriological question. The announcement of Gabriel was, 'You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21). The Magnificat is the song of high revolution about putting down the mighty from their thrones, exalting those of a low degree, filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich away empty, but the social justice about which the Blessed Virgin Mary sang is of no significance to these friends. The angelic song, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased,' is cosmic in its content, not announcing a blueprint of personal salvation. The Nazareth Manifesto of Luke 4:18f. is the liberation of the Jubilee year for all the oppressed, not saving a few believers. The essence of the Gospel is 'God so loved the world. . .' (John 3:16) and not that he loved a few individuals. The final hope is the New Heaven and the New Earth for the New Man in Christ: 'Behold the dwelling of God is with men; he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them and he will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away' (Rev. 21:3-5).

The cosmic salvation that is ultimately aimed at is beyond the grave. It is for that purpose that the Gospel is preached to the disobedient departed souls by Christ's descent into Hades (2 Pet. 3:18f; 4:6.). The vision of St Paul is, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and *under the earth* and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil. 2:10f.). Karl Barth's teaching that One was rejected that all may be elected is a universalism for which there is theological basis. An eternal hell over against the eternal God is a dualism challenging both the love and the sovereignty of God. It is more Christian to think of a loving Father seeking the prodigal sons even in Hades and bringing them home than a few of us sitting in heaven disregarding other members of our family suffering in the torment of hell. The Russian theologian Sergius Bulgakov does not posit an eternal hell and a purgatory as the Roman Catholic theologians do, but identifies hell with purgatory, teaching the triumph of God's love over the recalcitrant sinner. It seems to me that Jesus Christ, like Joseph of old, will tell us on the Last Day, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you' (Gen. 43:5). There is the story of a saint of God who said that he would not enjoy heaven if any one is in hell and that he would request God to send him to hell to save them with the Good News of Christ, rather than keep him in a heaven of partial salvation for a few. As a number of theologians like Barth have pointed out, all those who speak of eternal hell are speaking of eternal hell for others and not for themselves. If God is perfect love in eternal action, He will not rest till the last of His children is also brought to Him from his prodigality. This is not to be rejected as a dangerous universalism that does not take sin and evil seriously, but a teaching that all punishment is to save.

I am not saying the last word on eschatology, as if universalism is a dogma to be accepted by all. Certain passages like the one dealing with the sin against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven in this world or the world to come will point towards the possibility of eternal hell for a few. The Johannine teaching on eternal life only through belief in Christ (John 3:16 etc.) would give the impression of annihilation for all those who do not believe in Christ. Whether universalism or annihilation or eternal hell or eternal life only for the redeemed new man and annihilation for others, there is danger in each of these three doctrines. The first would give too much optimism, the second too much pessimism and the third a logical problem with the nature of the image of God created in man, as if it is destructible at death. Therefore, we must not be dogmatic about eschatology, but confess that at present we see only through a glass darkly. My only plea is that a loving God would not be satisfied with the salvation of only a few of His children and would keep the door of His house open even for the late comer. God does not want anyone to perish. He wants to save the whole world. Personal salvation is for mission in the world for the salvation of others. As in the Blessed Trinity, the person and society are inseparable. If at all there is a priority, it is for the society of Adam and Eve and not for the person of Seth. In the Godhead, however, this priority does not exist for one or the other. We must also move to this concept of the whole world as a nuclear family in which each lives for all and all live for each. This is ultimate salvation.

4. Practical Considerations

It is not only a theological truth, but also a practical necessity that humanity must become the new man in Christ with the communitarian, cosmic and kenotic emphasis. The greatest tragedy of our times is the bifurcation of the world into the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The gulf between the poor and the rich which was \$ 2000 fifteen years ago has become \$ 4000 today. While the income of the Tatas and the Birlas has increased about fourfold since independence in India, the income of the poor villager has decreased. Less than one hundred families are owning 40 per cent of the resources of India, even after a lot of talk about socialism and the practice of mixed economy which has prevented socialism in India. Nearly a half of all Indians are living under the poverty line and four per cent are enjoying unpardonable luxuries. I am not advocating the Chinese model of socialism as such, but urging the Government of India to pass just laws and to implement them without partiality or favour. Luxury in a world of poverty is a sin. India cannot afford five star hotels, palatial buildings for private houses, extremely high salaries for a few, costly weddings, superfluous shows of wealth in multifarious ways, alcoholic drinks and so on. What India needs is the right to work incorporated into the Constitution and the resources of the rich pooled together for work for all. The following points need elaboration, but I just mention them as they are all related to my understanding of the new man in Christ as communitarian, cosmic and kenotic.

- (i) The rich nations who object to world government must realize for their own benefit that it is indispensable.
- (ii) An international economic order is to be implemented as early as possible.
- (iii) Multi-national corporations must stop their exploitation of poor countries and serve humanity with the knowledge of their 'know-how'.
- (iv) Each nation with its own democratic government must be helped by the World Government to create jobs for all, to be satisfied with a simple and sustainable life-style and to give priority to the basic needs of man such as food, clothing, medicine, houses, education and freedom of worship.
- (v) The talk about the human rights which is glibly conducted must be a serious talk about the rights of the people in the slums and villages to get a job, eat a square meal, have the same access to the high ups in the State that the influential few have at present.
- (vi) The dignity of the white collar job and the dignity of the so-called menial jobs must be equal. Equality of opportunity is to be given priority. No one should live in huge houses when their fellowmen are sleeping on pavements. The Government must pass strong laws against building private houses and encourage small houses and apartments for all people. The difference in the salary within a nation should be only one to four as in Israel.
- (vii) The Christian Churches must have a new concept of ministry as the Ministry of Christ and in the pattern Christ showed to us in His life and practice. The bishops will have to become proletarian bishops, moving with the people, identifying with their sufferings and agonies, living in smaller houses and behaving as the father of the flock and not as Lord of *Thirumeni*.
- (viii) The theological seminaries must teach a theology of a classless society with all its implications and depth. There is no other correct theology. The Church must see the writings on the wall, '*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.*'