

threatens their very livelihood, their very sustenance. The elimination of starvation, and the alleviation of the tyranny that supports it, has priority over, say, relieving the boredom of the well-to-do in a society devoted to growth.

This taking of sides will of course produce conflict (of which there was much already). The powerful will try to hang on to their positions. One will not be able to avoid reflecting seriously on the place of violence in that conflict. Sad to say, it is not a conflict in which the church is to be found exclusively on the side of the exploited. *Christ* was there, and is there, but his "body," the church, is not—not all of it in any case. So in taking the side of the exploited, Christians will find themselves in opposition to some of those who confess the same Lord. That, for them, is yet another of the great sorrows of our world.

Interlude I

For Justice in Shalom

In Chapter II we saw that there are two fundamental dynamics shaping the modern world: freedom by mastery and freedom of self-determination. In the light of this, we may perhaps summarize the discussion contained in Chapter III in this way: liberation theology, with its emphasis on salvation, affirms the importance of freedom of self-determination, but never succeeds in incorporating into its vision, in any satisfactory way, freedom by mastery. The Amsterdam school, with its emphasis on creation, affirms the importance of freedom by mastery, but never succeeds in incorporating into its vision, in any satisfactory way, freedom of self-determination. To guide our thoughts, we need some vision yet more comprehensive than either of these. Of course there is no substitute for careful, informed, and specific reflection; but is there some comprehensive vision that can serve to orient those reflections and thereby keep us from losing our way? When architects design buildings, they begin with an image of forms and lights and shadows to which they gradually give increasing articulation. Is there any such image for us here?

I think there is. It is the vision of *shalom*—*peace*—first articulated in the Old Testament poetic and prophetic literature but then coming to expression in the New Testament as well. We shall see that *shalom* is intertwined with justice. In *shalom*, each person enjoys justice, enjoys his or her rights. There is no *shalom* without justice. But *shalom* goes beyond justice.

Shalom is the human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships: with God, with self, with fellows, with nature. It is *shalom* when

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

(Isa. 11:6-8)

But the peace which is *shalom* is not merely the absence of hostility, not merely being in right relationship. *Shalom* at its highest is *enjoyment* in one's relationships. A nation may be at peace with all its neighbors and yet be mis-

erable in its poverty. To dwell in shalom is to *enjoy* living before God, to *enjoy* living in one's physical surroundings, to *enjoy* living with one's fellows, to *enjoy* life with oneself.

Shalom in the first place incorporates right, harmonious relationships to God and delight in his service. When the prophets speak of shalom, they speak of a day when human beings will no longer flee God down the corridors of time, a day when they will no longer turn in those corridors to defy their divine pursuer. Shalom is perfected when humanity acknowledges that in its service of God is true delight. "The mountain of the house of the Lord," says the prophet,

shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
and many peoples shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

(Isa. 2:2-3)

Secondly, shalom incorporates right harmonious relationships to other *human beings* and delight in human community. Shalom is absent when a society is a collection of individuals all out to make their own way in the world. And of course there can be delight in community only when justice reigns, only when human beings no longer oppress one another. When "justice shall make its home in the wilderness, / and righteousness dwell in the grass-land"—only then will it be true that "righteousness shall yield shalom, / and its fruit be quietness and confidence for ever" (Isa. 32:16-17). In shalom,

Love and Fidelity now meet,
Justice and Peace now embrace;
Fidelity reaches up from earth
and Justice leans down from heaven.

(Psalm 85)

Thirdly, shalom incorporates right, harmonious relationships to *nature* and delight in our physical surroundings. Shalom comes when we, bodily creatures and not disembodied souls, shape the world with our labor and find fulfillment in so doing and delight in its results. In speaking of shalom the prophet spoke of a day when the Lord would prepare

a banquet of rich fare for all the people,
a banquet of wines well matured and richest fare,
well matured wines strained clear.

(Isa. 25:6)

He spoke of a day when the people "shall live in a tranquil country, / dwelling in shalom, in houses full of ease" (Isa. 32:18).

I said that justice, the enjoyment of one's rights, is indispensable to shalom. That is because shalom is an *ethical* community. If individuals are not granted what is due them, if their claim on others is not acknowledged by those others, if others do not carry out their obligations to them, then shalom is wounded. That is so even if there are no *feelings* of hostility between them and the others. Shalom cannot be secured in an unjust situation by managing to get all concerned to feel content with their lot in life. Shalom would not have been present *even if* all the blacks in the United States had been content in their state of slavery; it would not be present in South Africa *even if* all the blacks there felt happy. It is because shalom is an ethical community that it is wounded when justice is absent.

But the right relationships that lie at the basis of shalom involve more than right relationships to other human beings. They involve right relationships to God, to nature, and to oneself as well. Hence, shalom is more than an ethical community. Shalom is the *responsible* community in which God's laws for the multifaceted existence of his creatures are obeyed.

Shalom goes beyond even the responsible community. We may all have acted responsibly and yet shalom may be wounded, for delight may be missing. Always there are sorrows in our human existence that we are at a loss to heal. It is in this context that we must ultimately see the significance of technology. Technology does make possible advance toward shalom; progress in mastery of the world can bring shalom nearer. But the limits of technology must also be acknowledged: technology is entirely incapable of bringing about shalom between ourselves and God, and it is only scarcely capable of bringing about the love of self and neighbor.

I have already cited that best known of all shalom passages, the one in which Isaiah describes the anticipated shalom with a flourish of images of harmony—harmony among the animals, harmony between man and animal: "Then the wolf shall live with the sheep. . . ." That passage, though, is introduced with these words:

Then a shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall spring from his roots.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of counsel and power,
a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

(Isa. 11:1-2)

That shoot of which Isaiah spoke is he of whom the angels sang in celebration of his birth: "Glory to God in highest heaven, and on earth his *peace* for men on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:24). He is the one of whom the priest Zech-

Isaiah said that he "will guide our feet into the way of *peace*" (Luke 1:79). He is the one of whom Simeon said, "This day, Master, thou givest thy servant his discharge in *peace*; now thy promise is fulfilled" (Luke 2:29). He is the one of whom Peter said that it was by him that God preached "good news of *peace*" to Israel (Acts 10:36). He is the one of whom Paul, speaking as a Jew to the Gentiles, said that "he came and preached *peace* to you who were far off and *peace* to those who were near" (Eph. 2:17). He is in fact Jesus Christ, whom Isaiah called the "prince of *peace*" (Isa. 9:6).

It was this same Jesus who said to the apostles in his Farewell Discourse, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:10-11). And then he added, "I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do" (John 14:12).

Can the conclusion be avoided that not only is shalom God's cause in the world but that all who believe in Jesus will, along with him, engage in the works of shalom? Shalom is both God's cause in the world and our human calling. Even though the full incursion of shalom into our history will be divine gift and not merely human achievement, even though its episodic incursion into our lives now also has a dimension of divine gift, nonetheless it is shalom that we are to work and struggle for. We are not to stand around, hands folded, waiting for shalom to arrive. We are workers in God's cause, his peace-workers. The *missio Dei* is our mission.¹

An implication of this is that our work will always have the two dimensions of a struggle for justice and the pursuit of increased mastery of the world so as to enrich human life. Both together are necessary if shalom is to be brought nearer. Development and liberation must go hand in hand. Ours is both a cultural mandate and a liberation mandate—the mandate to master the world for the benefit of mankind, but also the mandate

to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke . . .
to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood.

(Isa. 58:6-7)

The shalom perspective incorporates but goes beyond the creation perspective of the Amsterdam school. At the same time, it incorporates but goes beyond the salvation perspective of the liberation theologians.

Chapter IV

The Rich and the Poor

In a now-famous passage from his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth said this:

the human righteousness required by God and established in obedience—the righteousness which according to Amos 5²⁴ should pour down as a mighty stream—has necessarily the character of a vindication of right in favour of the threatened innocent, the oppressed poor, widows, orphans and aliens. For this reason, in the relations and events in the life of His people, God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied and deprived of it.¹

As we read these powerful and influential words, let us retain our historical perspective and remember that Barth was by no means the first to speak of God as taking sides with the poor and oppressed. Some forty or fifty years before, in his 1891 speech to the Christian Social Congress in Holland, Abraham Kuyper had said the same: "When rich and poor stand opposed to each other, [Jesus] never takes His place with the wealthier, but always stands with the poorer. He is born in a stable; and while foxes have holes and birds have nests, the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And again, "both the Christ, and also just as much His apostles after Him as the prophets before Him, invariably took sides *against* those who were powerful and living in luxury, and *for* the suffering and oppressed."²

But can that be right? Does God take sides among human beings? Central in the Calvinist consciousness, and present in the consciousness of other Christians as well, is the conviction that God has chosen or *elected* certain human beings. But this is fundamentally different from the idea that God takes sides among us. Can it be true that God both *elects* and *takes sides*? And if he takes sides, can it really be said that he takes sides with the poor against the rich, with the oppressed against the oppressor? Would it not be much better to say that he takes sides with the righteous against the unrighteous, or perhaps with those in authority against those who flout authority? No doubt God condemns the sin of tyranny and no doubt he condemns the sin of greed. But that is quite different from saying that he takes sides with poor people against rich people, with oppressed people against oppressing people. When it comes to persons before God are we not *all* poor, are we not *all* oppressed?

Having laid the groundwork in the three preceding chapters, I want