

## **Be in a fair Way**

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A well-known French philosopher, Claude Tresmontant (1925-1997), expressed in his discourse presented in Paris, 1977 that Christianity must represent itself to people of the following generation as an understandable teaching, if it wants to offer a powerful testimony even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Equally, it must stand for intellectual nourishment as well as reflect ongoing fulfillment of science of the creation which forms new humanity on the basis of cooperation between God and people. These words are relevant especially in this age which is characteristic by the rise of secularism that is pushing both Christian values and life aside as something which is not able to offer anything to a man of the present day. In this connection, it is important to think about the future and try to find a way to continue. Moreover, it is inevitable to have the courage of critical analysis of the current situation of society from the Christian perspective. The need of determination of basic goals fulfillment of which will enable the other development of life in this earth is also important.

### ***In Search of the Christian Identity as a Way to Solve the Crisis of the Postmodern World***

There are two unhealthy extremes among Christians nowadays. One of them is passivity and unconcern with problems of the temporal world. The second is adherence to this world, in particular to its material values. We cease to be interested in quality of life around us. We argue that we cannot change anything in this world and therefore every activity is useless even before we try. Of course, both of these are prejudicial tendencies in the life of a Christian. They are in a strict opposition to a command of Jesus to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. A Christian is supposed to change the world and make it better in spite of both evil and injustice which are a part of this world. Regrettably, adherence to this world and to its material offers is present even in our lives. We try to provide for our lives. Career and success tempt us in a way which is difficult to resist. Self-confidence verging on arrogance, pride as well as lack of selfless love accompanies a daily life of many of us. We criticize everything and everybody around us. However, we somehow forget to

criticize ourselves. We complain that our age is difficult. We are exposed to stress because of incessantly increasing expenses. Therefore, we are afraid of the future. A burden of unpredictable events and natural disasters makes us to look for the causes of this unhealthy situation. There are various attitudes in regard to these causes. Some believe that apocalypse is close or that it is a God's punishment. On the contrary, others are not concerned for the causes of this situation because it is pointless to look for solutions.

Only few people think about this situation seriously and thoroughly, since it is inconvenient and objectionable. If we do so, we will find out that each one of us contributes to its deterioration. However, it is the right time to think about the way of living which is a product of this age. We have somehow adapted to requirements of over advertised society in order to compensate what was not enabled during long years of totalitarianism. Most of all, we have turn out to be consumers whose lives are not oriented to spiritual values. We want to have, not to be.<sup>1</sup> We desire to possess not to give. It is a problem which has been present from the beginning of scientific revolution. We arrogate a right to rule in a sovereign manner over the whole earth. Moreover, we devastate natural resources and subordinate our lives to the law of supply and demand. In the other words, we subordinate our lives to economic relations which lack moral and ethical values. In past one hundred years, humanity has tried to find a meaningful recourse from this situation in form of various types of ideology which were oriented to welfare of people. Paradoxically, none of these efforts helped to eliminate or at least decrease poverty and penury in the world either in material or spiritual way. We somehow miss the point – no ideology or theory can help us. It is “the change of heart“ that can help us. In this connection, it is necessary to turn as well as to return to God. However, it requires total reassessment of our lives. Yet we still repeat the mistakes of the past. We try to reach temporal values and therefore we forget eternal values. We enjoy listening to sermons but their real meaning which to teach us to live in a different way is often forgotten. Therefore, our lives are full of pointless problems, misunderstandings, intolerance and even hatred.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a fundamental difference between “to have“ and “to be“. This matter is analyzed by an important psychoanalyst, Erich Fromm (1900-1980) in his famous book To Have Or To Be (FROMM E. To Have Or To Be? The continuum Publishing Company, New York, 1997. By force of detail analysis of all fields of human life Fromm proves that it is being not possessing that leads to real humaneness.

We are too much burdened by temporal things. Eternal values are forgotten because of various worries of our daily lives.

Evidently, features of our characters arising from the way we live are pathogenic and therefore they make both people and society unhealthy. This unhealthiness has to be ceased radically. The necessity of a radical change of the way in which people of this age live has been pointed out by the so-called the Club of Rome. It is the international organization that associates important scientists, economists, businessmen, international high civil servants, heads of state and former heads of state from all five continents who are convinced that the future of humankind is not determined once and for all and that each human being can contribute to the improvement of our societies. The purpose of this organization is to create a model of both the situation and perspectives of the world. Moreover, it points out consequences of tendencies of the civilizational development and looks for possible alternatives for humanity. In this connection, it tries to outline a program which is to indicate the way of acting which is necessary for solution of critical situations as well as for survival of humanity as a whole. The organization produced two reports. One of them is from D. H. Meadows; the other is from M. D. Mesarovič and E. Pestel. Both reports refer to worldwide technological, economical and population trends. Both of them came to the same conclusion – if there are no radical technological and economical changes, the global catastrophe will occur. The earth is not able to bear up devastating interferences of people for a long time and will collapse. Nevertheless, there are only a few people who seriously think about this situation and about its consequences in the future. Naturally, we do not want to make people worried and afraid. However, it is necessary to pay attention to these problems and not to ignore or simplify them because the situation is serious and requires a radical change of our lives.

### ***Analogy between the heaven and earth as a possible solution of the meaning of history***

Analogy between the kingdom of God and the world is one of possible solutions of the meaning of history which is able to change the quality of our lives. This analogy implies consequences to the lives of individuals as well as the Christian Church. The concept of analogy between the heaven and earth can be found in the theology of Paul Tillich, the important theologian and philosopher of the twentieth

century.<sup>2</sup> Even though this concept does not represent a separate part of his theological and philosophical system, it is implicitly present in most of his writings. Analogy or similarity between the kingdom of God and the earth can be described as formation of the world on the basis of principles which are embraced in a symbol of the kingdom of God. In this connection, however, we have to ask how to understand this analogy and why it is of such importance. Moreover, we are to explain symbolical language which is used for its description. It refers to the relationship between God and a man as well as between a man and other creatures. According to Tillich, God is the very essence of Being. Therefore, God does not exist nearby or over something else. However, as the Being in itself, God is not a part of the opposite between existential and essential being. He is the deepest essence of the whole being; he unconditionally relates to us. A man is a part of historic providence or the directing creativity of God as Tillich calls it.<sup>3</sup> Historic providence is not to be understood deterministically as a project of history which had been outlined in a detailed way. However, the relation of God to the world is to be understood as fundamental ontological polarity between freedom and destiny. In other words, the directing creativity of God is activated through both spontaneous acting of creatures and human freedom. The structure of history also embraces accidental phenomena and therefore always brings on something new to the life.<sup>4</sup> The existence of a man is an existence of ambiguity. In this connection, ambiguity means that essential being (the state in which alienation between a man and God is entirely eliminated) and existential being (the state of alienation between a man and God) are mutually connected.<sup>5</sup> In this regards, it is necessary to mention the power of salvation which is desired to be reached. This power leads a man to change the present situation in which the world occurs. This change is done especially by exercising of principles of the kingdom of God in daily lives.

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<sup>2</sup> The following part is based on my article „*Analógia medzi nebom a zemou v teológii Paula Tillicha*.“ Published in the collected papers: Igor Kišš a kolektív. *Analógia medzi nebom a zemou*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, Evanjelická bohoslovecká fakulta, 2003, p. 92-96.

<sup>3</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume II, *Existence and the Christ*, p. 130.

<sup>4</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume III, *Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God*, p. 372.

<sup>5</sup> See in: ÁBEL F. *Exercising a criterion agape in a struggle for rescue of human beings*. Collection of lectures from international theological conference „The Many Faces of Love“ (PAX ROMANA Annual Conference, „The Many Faces of Love,“ in Toronto) in Toronto, September 9th, 2006. Available to the Internet: <http://ca.geocities.com/gondolkodo@rogers.com/talalkozo/T2006/morzsaHU06.html>.

## Two attitudes in respect of the meaning of history

In connection with existence, it is apt to point out that its events occur in space-time. Consequently, existence is a part of the historic dimension. History is most of all understood as history of humankind in which the spirit is being actualized. In this regards, historic awareness is present. However, it embraces a history of the whole universe as well. The whole universe is to be understood in the historic perspective. Since people realize the historic dimension in which they belong, they look for the meaning of the history and its final TELOS (goal). Naturally, the meaning of life can vary according to a man. The character of the meaning of life then influences the way in which he acts towards the other people or nature. There are two basic attitudes in connection with understanding of the historic dimension (existence of the creation in space-time). One of these attitudes is based on historicity (the positive attitude). The other is based on non-historicity (the negative attitude). The latter means that history has neither meaning nor goal for at all. Therefore, it has nothing to offer to people as well. It is only a tragic cycle of births and ends of all living creatures or an inevitability which has no meaning in itself. Consequently, it cannot cause anything new. People are forced to live in the historic dimension but on the other side they are supposed to reach salvation attainable only beyond historicity. There exists no symbol which can be compared to the kingdom of God. Therefore, a relationship to the world is constituted by passivity, as it is evident mostly in Hinduism, Buddhism or Taoism. There is no endeavour and motivation to change the course of historical events towards the goal of universal humaneness and justice. However, in spite of this passivity in regards of the situation in which both the earth and humanity occurs, Tillich points out a paradox of this attitude. It dwells in a deep sorrow with universal suffering which is present in all dimensions of life. Paradoxically, since the western world is based on the historic understanding, it often lacks this kind of sorrow.<sup>6</sup>

The other attitude (the positive attitude) is based on the historic understanding of the meaning of history. It means that it is comprised by endeavour to reveal as well as to reach the goal of history. Previous eras confirm various ways of understanding of the meaning of history as well as diverse efforts to reach its goal. One of them was represented by faith in progress. In this connection, it was either faith in endless

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<sup>6</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume III, *Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God*, p. 352.

progress or faith in final fulfillment. The others were based on utopian understanding of history which emerged from faith in progress but had a certain goal of history. This goal was usually represented by paradise in the earth which is due to efforts and activity of people. These utopian tendencies have been motivity of various revolutionary movements as well as of secular utopianism in the whole world. In contrary, there exists a transcendental interpretation of history which strictly excludes both culture and nature from redemptive powers in history. There is no connection between the kingdom of God and this earth. They are separated by an impenetrable gap. Therefore, people themselves are not able to change the situation of this world.<sup>7</sup>

Even though these attitudes to both the meaning and goal of history represent a certain progress, they are not really sufficient because they can be never fulfilled. However, every attempt to formulate these attitudes proves that people desire to reach a meaningful goal of their existence which is interconnected to existence of the whole universe. Moreover, these attempts prove that people aspire to overcome anxiety which emerges from awareness of their finality and possible non-being. Certainly, it is evident that only a positive understanding of history as well as an endeavour to find its meaning are able to create new values in space-time. Consequently, they are able to form this world on the basis of final TELOS as it is shaped by a certain group of people or community. However, there is a great danger that people will absolutize partial and temporal values. Consequently, people are convinced that they can create „the paradise in the earth“ or the „the third stage“ (according to Tillich) in their own. This has caused much suffering and disappointment as well as subsequent pessimism and passivity. However, it is necessary to realize that the meaning and final goal of history have a historic as well as non-historic aspect and none of them can be excluded. Any one-sided interpretation is a cause of both deep disappointment and the spread of destructive forces in history. .

### **The symbol of the kingdom of God in connection with the meaning of history**

In connection with the latter attitude, it is necessary to know what is the very goal and meaning of history and what creates its historic and non-historic aspect. In regard to Christianity, it is definitely the kingdom of God which offers both the meaning and

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<sup>7</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume III, *Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of Go*, p. 355-356.

final goal of history. Tillich does not understand this symbol as a supernatural order in which people come after their death. It is dynamic force operating in this earth which fights against evil forces in every power structure of the world<sup>8</sup> and which has its non-historic goal. Christians pray for the coming of this force in the Lord's prayer. This symbol is characteristic by a political, social, personal as well as universal aspect. It contains all efforts of humanity – both past and present. Since, in this case it is the kingdom of God, it means God's own dominion, it is important to point out that it lacks utopian character. God is the only one who can fulfill this goal. Furthermore, it embraces the concept of peace and justice but it is not in contrast with neither a political aspect of this symbol nor power itself, since God as the Power of being is the source of such power which represents the eternal possibility to oppose to non-being. The kingdom of God also includes a social aspect which points out that holiness does not exist without unconditional moral imperative of justice. The symbol of the kingdom of God grants eternal worth to the existence of an individual. The non-historic goal of history does not represent the end but the fulfillment of humanity in each human being. Finally, the kingdom of God embraces universality. It reflects both the final fulfillment of humanity and life in all dimensions. The kingdom of God is the process of rebirth of old things to new creation. In Paul's words, God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28).

### **Central manifestation of the kingdom of God in history**

The so called centre of history makes for Christianity to be aware of the meaning and final goal of both human history and history of the universe. It is a metaphorical expression of a certain moment in history for which all that preceded and all that has followed is preparation as well as accepting. It is a criterion as well as a source of redemptive power in history. Furthermore, it is manifestation of the kingdom of God in history. Christianity considers the revelation of Jesus as the Christ to be the centre of history. Jesus as the Christ is a bearer of the New being. He is the one who has overcome a conflict between essential unity of God and existential alienation of a man. History has both the meaning and the centre in him. It is the faith which dares to emphasize the event which it relies on to a criterion of all events of revelation. The centre of history is not connected to the past alone. It occurs in every time and place

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<sup>8</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume III, *Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God*, p. 356.

in which it is accepted as the centre of history. In a biblical and theological language, this concept is expressed by a symbol of timeless presence of Christ in every epoch. However, there is a question which emerges from this claim – how can Christianity substantiate that this very event is the centre of history? Besides the matter of daring faith, there is also a theological claim that in this very event all questions in regard to ambiguity of historic existence are answered. It is the only event in which the historic dimension is entirely and universally actualized.<sup>9</sup>

### **Necessity of forming this world in the image of the kingdom of God**

The explanation of basic terms which are used in the theology of Paul Tillich is necessary for a definite answer to a question of need of forming this world in the image of the kingdom of God. Every individual, group of people, nation or generation has to decide repeatedly how to act. They have to decide for justice or injustice. They have to choose between God of justice (New being; Christ) and his opposite. The decision against justice does mean self-destruction. Paradoxically, there are people who decide against Christ, although they do not even know his name. These decisions are formed by acting in accordance with the law of love which is represented by Jesus himself or by acting against it. Life which is in accordance with the law of love is to be accepted into the unity of fulfillment that overcomes non-being. Life which is not in accordance with this law is to be excluded from the fulfillment. Therefore, it is to be plunged into despair of non-being. People are always in the process of final deciding either for God or against God. It can be claimed that analogy between the kingdom of God and the earth occurs whenever people decide for Christ and thus for God as the very essence of being which overcomes the power of non-being. It does not matter if they are or are not members of a certain church.

### **The role of churches in forming analogy between the kingdom and God and the earth**

However, it does not mean that both the existence and need of churches in the world is not important. The latent church as a presence and communion of the Spirit has been present in every epoch. It was present even before the central manifestation

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<sup>9</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume III, *Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God*, p. 367-368.

of the New Being. Churches are bearers of the kingdom of God. They are supposed to point out the real essence of historic time as well as the goal which is to be culmination of history. In history, the kingdom of God is represented by groups and individuals in whom the latent church is actualized. Both the manifest church and Christian churches have been able to cause movement in history towards the goal only because of the past and future preparatory activity of the latent church.

The church does not embody only the communion of the Spirit. It also represents the kingdom of God. In other words, it includes multidimensional unity of life into sacramental manifestation. Life in all of its dimensions participates in the final goal of history. Therefore, it naturally has to participate in redemptive power of the New Being. Most of all, it is evident in practice of the Orthodox church. Its sacramental consecration of elements from all areas of life proves unity of life in its creation basis as well as in its final fulfillment. This is the very motivity which is used by the Holy Spirit to lead people in their effort of forming the historic dimension in the image of the kingdom of God. The church history itself as a representative of the kingdom of God in the earth proves this fact. The church history has judged the world history in a paradoxical way. Bearing a criterion (the New Being in Jesus as the Christ) which is aimed against the church history alone, it has judged the world history by judging itself. People have been under a changing influence of the church for more than two thousands years which after all has brought positive changes in a social attitude. Since Christian churches are not the kingdom of God itself, the ideal state has not been reached. However, Christianity has radically changed mutual relationships of people wherever it was accepted because the very existence of Christian churches points out the kingdom of God.

### ***The centre of history as the beginning of the way of healing***

As it is mentioned before, history has its centre. Therefore, it is not only a dynamic process but also an integral process with its centre. This centre which is represented by manifestation of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ embraces motion towards itself. The beginning and the end of this motion mean the beginning and the end of manifestation of the kingdom of God in history. History as both the history of revelation and the history of salvation begins with a moment in which

people have realized their alienated existence and their determination to overcome this alienation. In this connection, the end of history begins in a moment when people cease to look for the meaning of their existence. The universe has not been transformed yet. Transformation through the Spirit of God is relevant in man's spirit alone, since he is first in the New Being. The universe follows.

However, there is a function in which acting of the Holy Spirit is spread out over all areas. It is a function of healing which anticipates the fulfilled kingdom of God. Healing in any form is an effect of the Spirit of God. This is also characterized by a Latin word for salvation – SALVATIO – which means, „healing.“ The act of healing is closely connected to salvation.<sup>10</sup> It is a power of being which overcomes non-being. It is eternity which overcomes the temporal world. It is mercy which overcomes the sin. People by their very essence are lead to overcome non-being in all dimensions of life. They realize their connection to the other creatures and the whole creation. The effort to overcome non-being is possible only when it embraces efforts for preservation of life in the earth. These efforts can be called “healing.“ This process is not without problems, failures, and times of regress or stagnation. However, it leads to the final goal. Therefore, it is also a process of forming the temporal world in the image of eternity. Consequently, it is analogy between the kingdom of God and the earth. It is based on manifestation of the New Being in history. The New being has become a source of an expression of necessity of forming analogy between the kingdom of God and the earth. It has also become a source of courage for people to choose being instead of doubts, worries and despair.

### **Conclusion**

It should be us, Christians, who are able to understand relevance of this situation and decide for the change. It is necessary to decide for such a way of existence which is to be and not to have. Especially, it is important to do so in the age which offers a magnitude of possibilities to make our lives better, easier and more comfortable. However, this is just a short-term illusion which has been reached to the detriment of rapid aggravation of milieu of a much bigger group of people. For instance, we can mention an increasing gab between the so called north and the south of the earth. It is inevitable to start to solve these problems practically not only theoretically. It does not

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<sup>10</sup> TILLICH P. *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; Volume III, *Life and Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God*, p. 277.

have to be a great project which requires much money. However, we can and are supposed to start from ourselves. It is good enough to restrain oneself, be frugal and learn to live in frugality. It is essential to think of our neighbors, listen to their opinions and be interested in their lives, feelings, worries as well as joy. Let us be courageous and live according a principle “to give“ and not “to have.“ The words of our Lord himself: “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*“ (Mt 6:33, NIV)<sup>11</sup> are a challenge to a change of our lives. These words should be in both our hearts and minds. We should intensively think about them to make them relevant especially in our daily lives. Therefore, let us think about them – we who believe that our lives have the real value and meaning because they are gifts from God who has entrusted with guardianship of our neighbors and the earth. It is the right time!

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