



WORD FOR SUNDAY
Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday Readings: (R1) Dt. 12:1-3. (R2) Hebr. 10:11-14. (R3) Mk. 13:24-32.

As we approach the end of the Church's year, the theme of the Sunday readings is very much that of the end of the world.

Rudolf Bultmann poo-hooped the idea of the end of the world. Still, the biblical treatment of it unquestionably contains marked cosmological elements.

Of course, in the phrase "end of the world," the word "world" does not mean primarily the physical structure of the cosmos, but the world of man, human history. Thus in the first instance, "end of the world" means the end of this kind of world — the human world!

For the Bible, cosmos and man are not two clearly separable quantities. A world without man or man without a world seems unthinkable. The cosmos is not just an outward framework of human history — a static kind of container holding all kinds of living creatures. Cosmos and man, matter and spirit, form a single history which advances in such a way that mind emerges more and more as the dominant principle. In a certain sense man is remodeling the cosmos. Through technology, he is imprinting his mind on it. Man's mind, draws the world, so to speak, into itself, creating a new world and at the same time ending the old.

However, the "end of the world" in which the Christian believes is quite different from the total victory of technology. But the wedding of matter and mind by technology does afford an insight into how the reality of belief in the return of Christ is to be conceived. Cosmos and man, like husband and wife, will reach their highest unification in the love of Christ. As in the resurrection of the body, the spirit will spiritualize the body; so in the "end of the world" a world will come into existence totally dominated by the mind and will of Christ.

However, the "end of the world" must never be conceived as the result of a historical process now going on in the world. Nowhere does the Bible talk about progress to an earthly paradise. There is no thought that things will get better and better, become more and more like paradise on earth. The opposite is true: "it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time" (R1).

The "end of the world" which the returning Christ brings, therefore, is not a historical situation that ultimately could emerge from the level of history itself, something one could term the result of a "development." The "end of the world" is an act of God, confronting us from the other side, surprising us like a "thief in the night." "As to the exact day or hour, no one knows it" (R3). The bridegroom approaches while the foolish maidens sleep.

And when Christ comes, He comes to judge the living and the dead. In the Middle Ages, Christians saw the judgment as "a day of wrath" (Dies Irae). They

NEW AMBASSADOR

Vatican City [RNS] — Dahomey's new ambassador to the Holy See, Virgil Octave Trevoje, presented his credentials to Pope Paul VI on Nov. 8. In his presentation remarks, the representative of the west African republic praised the contribution of Catholic missionaries to the development of his country, "particularly in the field of education."

looked forward to it with fear and dread. The early Christians, however, interpreted the judgment as an event of joy and hope. They cried, "Maranatha" ("Our Lord, come"). They put emphasis not on the judgment, but on the Judge. Since the Judge was not a stranger, but a brother, their fears were tempered by an overriding hope.

When St. John on Patmos had a vision of Christ, he fell down as one dead before this figure of power. But our Lord laid His hand on him and said to him as once before. He had done when crossing the Sea of Galilee in a storm, "Fear not, it is I." The early Christians transferred this idea to their meeting the Judge of the living and the dead. "It is I, fear not."

If now in our earthly life we accept the friendship of Jesus, become His intimate through daily prayers and the sacraments, then at the "end of the world" when He comes to judge the living and the dead, we too shall be sustained by the unfaltering hope of hearing from the Judge, "Fear not, it is I."

Baptist Hits Soviet Attack on Catholicism

U.N. Sidesteps Declaration

United Nations, N.Y. [RNS] — The United Nations has postponed action on a declaration covering religious intolerance — again!

After having been instructed by the General Assembly last year to take up such a declaration as a matter of priority, the Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee unanimously adopted a proposal to defer action.

Instead, at the suggestion of Bulgaria and Guinea, the committee sent its documentation to the Human Rights Commission with instructions to prepare a new proposal on religious freedom which would then be debated by the Assembly, presumably sometime in 1974.

The "declaration" idea had been agreed upon last year in view of the fact that after 13 years of debate on this subject, the assembly was nowhere near agreement on a "convention" which would be binding on the signatory countries.

The Assembly wanted to produce some documents on religious freedom to coincide with the 25th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human

Rights on Dec. 10. Thus it came up with the idea of a declaration which would not be binding on governments and would therefore be easier to achieve.

This plan has also been torpedoed.

The Vatican contributed to the debate by submitting a written set of observations and suggestions. Some were taken from Pacem in Terris, the encyclical of the late Pope John XXIII.

Byelorussia saw the Pope's words as proof that the proposed declaration before the committee demonstrated "the bias of the draft towards the Roman Catholic Church, which has always been a gigantic reactionary force and which has destroyed some of the world's greatest thinkers."

This remark prompted the Rev. Carlos Vela, an observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, to take the floor and say that he did not intend to engage in polemics. He assured the committee, however, that the Vatican felt that a "declaration," although it would not have any effect in law, could be a step toward effective measures.

He said that the Holy See fully agreed with freedom to practice

or change a religion or belief.

Rep. John H. Buchanan (R-Ala.), a Southern Baptist clergyman, educator, told the committee that the United States considered the Byelorussian intervention "an intemperate and intolerant" attack on the Roman Catholic Church.

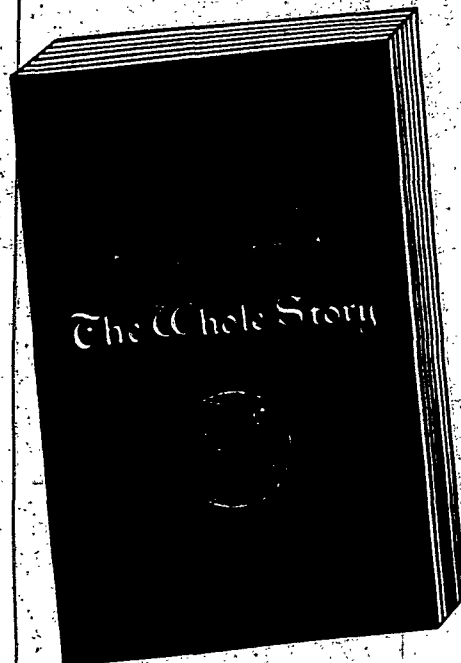
He said if reality matched the views expressed in the committee, there would be no need for a declaration, but that the Byelorussian attack demonstrated that intolerance existed.

He said that he himself was not Catholic, but "I thank God for the contributions to humanity made by people of that faith."

Of this same question, Burundi spoke of a long history of religious intolerance from the time of the inquisition and the Crusades and said that it has been continued by missionaries "who usually fight against emancipation."

Burundi's delegate claimed that sedition was often carried out under the auspices of churches; and that religious groups "unceasingly speak political powers." For these reasons, he said, Burundi was withholding its opinions on the proposed declaration.

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