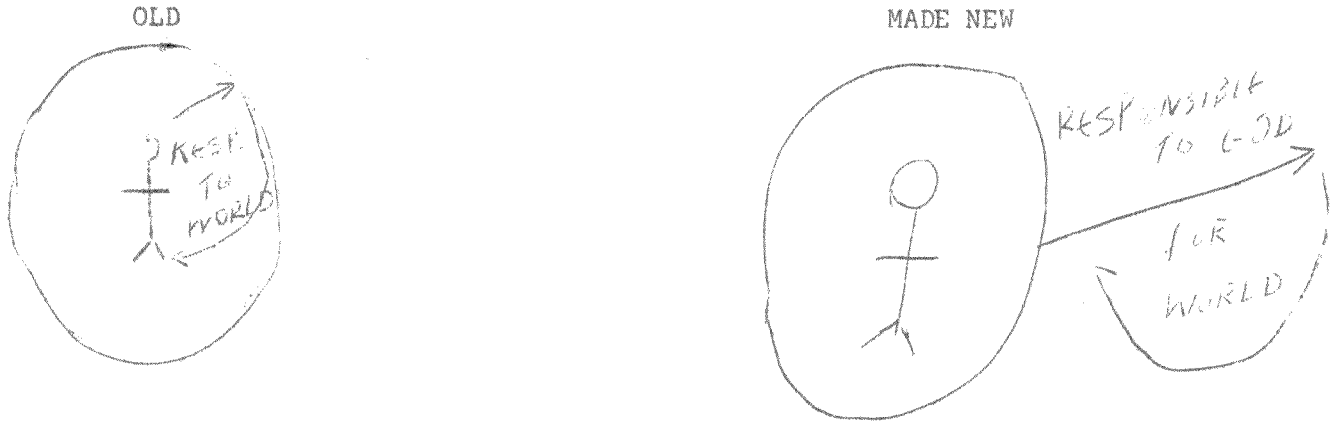


TWO WORLDS



INTRODUCTION	TWO WORLDS/ RESPONSIBILITY	OLD WORLD/ SIN	NEW WORLD/SALVATION STORY	HISTORICITY
1-4	5-7	8-11	12-17	18-21

1. I have several reasons to be angry with Gogarten. One of them is that he keeps dredging up old problems that you've bracketed a long time ago, and very comfortably bracketed. I remember 20 years ago when Allen and I had left a Methodist Youth Fellowship meeting and gone across the street to the Walgreen's Drugstore to have chocolate malts with raw eggs in them because somebody had told us it helped you gain weight. And we were discussing the virgin birth. Allen had been to college a couple of years and so he was saying there was no such thing, while I was defending the virgin birth, having not heard about it but just recently. It was one of those arguments that you knew you weren't going to win. The important thing was that you got in the last word. And my last word was, "Well, if you don't believe in the virgin birth, then you've got to throw out the divinity of Christ."

2. It wasn't too long after that that I went to college and sure enough, the virgin birth went down the drain. I showed up in seminary practically an atheist, or at best, an agnostic. All of these old problems that we've bracketed for so long, in a sense, are now coming back, and Gogarten, I think, will be a healing kind of influence on those old sores, in getting these old concepts rearticulated in a secular way.

3. Now, the second reason I get angry with Gogarten is that he could have done a little better job in putting these old concepts and images into secular categories. I'm going to leave the overview for you to review for yourself in order to move right into Chapter 7. I want to try to take Chapter 7 and put it in more secular categories

if possible. I'm going to do it with four basic categories. The first is the two worlds/responsibility. My second category is the old world/sin. My third category is the new world/salvation story. And my fourth category is the historicity of the event.

4. My chart of Chapter 7 goes like this: I've retitled it, "The Transformation of the World by Jesus." It seems to me that, in this chapter, Gogarten isn't so much concerned with the historicity of the event as he is in getting articulated the New Testament Christology as he understands it. And then on the other side of that, you've got to say that he is concerned about it, but anyway I left it out of my title. Then paragraphs 1-10 is my major division.. I call that "The Event". And then 11-15, "The Manifestation of the Event". Then I divided it between 2 and 3, between 7 & 8, and between 14 and 15. That gives you enough of a chart of the whole chapter if you want to use it. The key paragraph for me is paragraph 3, where he lays out the process of salvation story. And then the next key paragraph is paragraph 10, where he delineates what he means by the historicity of the event. And then paragraph 14, where he sums up again in a clear way what he means by the saving event.

Chapter 7: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD BY JESUS														
THE EVENT										THE MANIFESTATION OF THE EVENT				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
key par.		*							*					

5. Now, Gogarten operates basically out of the image of two worlds. He makes it very, very clear that he's not talking about a two story universe, and he's not talking about another world, somewhere out there, but he's talking about this world, period. But the difference is that the other world is this world transformed. He talks about the old world, and then about the new world--I'd like to say he talks about the made-new world. Both are the same world. The historicity of the Jesus Christ event depends upon it being the same world. When you talk about man in the new world, it's the same world that man is in, but it's a transformed world.

6. It's under the category of responsibility that Gogarten is delineating this old ancient imagery about the two worlds. And he talks about the old world as that world in which man is responsible to the world; or to the earthly. Remember Kierkegaard's categories of: concern over and about the earthly? It seems to me, though Gogarten doesn't say this, that responsibility to the world throws you back into responsibility for yourself. That's the inevitable result of having your responsibility centered on the earthly, that it throws you back to be responsible for yourself only, finally, and that is destructive.

7. Now the difference in the new world is that you have your responsibility centered not to the earthly, but to God. You are responsible to God, or, as Gogarten says in this chapter, in the sight of God, and therefore responsible for the world. Responsibility for the world is possible only in this relationship of responsibility to God. Now when you get over into the new world you're in an entirely different world. After you've said that it's the same world, then you've got to say that it's a different world. When the people show up and say to Jesus, "Your mother is outside waiting for you," he says that "My mother and my brothers and my sisters are those who live in this world of responsibility to God and therefore for the world."

8. Now I want to spend most of my time, then, simply laying out these two worlds. The old world, or if you want to choose another ancient category, s-i-n, is categorized, first of all, by the lie. That's a word that you've probably run into in some Christ lecture some way or other. He uses several different ways to talk about this in this chapter, I like the category of the lie the best. And the lie simply is that in the old world what is going on is that you are replacing God with the world, or that is to say, you are giving religious veneration to the earthly, You are taking the creation and putting it in the place of the creator. You are usurping God's position by placing the creation as the creator, and that, as you know, is the practical definition of idolatry. But the key here to me is to see that what you do in this old world is that you trust the earthly for your significance, you place your trust in that which is earthly--your family, your job, your money, your position, your prestige, or whatever you want to put in there that's not God. 1

9. Now the second point he makes is that this is futile. That is to say that all of this, minus nothing, passes away, period. It all goes, Nothing stays. It passes away, period. And when every you put your trust in that which passes away, whenever you put your faith in that which does not last, then finally you're up against futility. Finally it leads to futility, to the collapse of meaning. Whenever your value is resting upon that which passes away, the inevitable result is futility.

10. The third point that he makes throughout the chapter is that you are sentenced, or you are condemned in this situation, and by that he means that there's no escape, there's no way to get out of this, once you are there. Once you've given the power of your being over to the earthly, then you're trapped in it, and there's no way to get out of it, just period. This is, there's no way to get out of it, because you cannot even recognize that you're in it. We talk about it this way: we say that it has to come from the outside. You cannot destroy your own illusions. You are sentenced to this situation. You are under the power and the authority of the earthly, and there's no way in the world for you to get out of it by yourself. That's the hell of it all.

11. And the fourth point is that finally you end in despair. And the gift of that despair is that it is the very truth of God that takes you to the ultimate conclusion of futility and despair. That is to say, the truth of God, that God is God and not the earthly, is that reality which locks you into the despair which is the ultimate conclusion of this kind of trust in the earthly. Now, then what you're left with in the old world is that you're always operating in despair, or you're always operating in the final result of futility. You're always aimed towards death. The aim of your life becomes death. The meaning of your life becomes futility. Whenever you place whatever it is that you were living out of collapses in on you, and you're left with nothing. You're left with nonbeing on your hands.

12. Now, the salvation story, or the new world existence, is in essence the reconstruction of the creation as creation by giving the value or the religious veneration to God rather than to the earthly. That is to say, what you're after in the new world is to have the world reconstructed as the creation of God. But Gogarten says you can't do that unless you get at the cause that got it messed up in the first place, and the cause is just what the lie is. The only way that you get at this lie, or the only way you can get at the cause, is through the truth of God.

13. Now, he says, the only way you can get at the truth is that the truth of God breaks in upon you. Here in the old world you are condemned or sentenced and unable to do anything about yourself. The only way that the truth gets through to you is

that someone has to submit to the earthly situation in the context of being responsible to God. The only way in which you reconstruct the universe so that the creator becomes the creator and the creation becomes the creation is for someone to submit to the condemnation, to the utter doom which is sentenced upon you by the earthly, in the context of being responsible to God. It is only God who can call the new creation into being. Man cannot call that new creation into being. And it's through someone being obedient to God that the new creation is released or called into being.

14. Let me try again to say what I think Gogarten means by that. The way in which the obedience of Jesus calls the new creation into being is that he submits himself to the earthly life of futility, and in living out the earthly life of futility, lives it as a gift of God and therefore disclosed the lie which makes possible the creation, or the new decision, as we would say it, in the new world. It's something like this: It's when a man willingly wills to be his creaturely existence that he loves God. Or it's when you willingly will to be that which you were created to be, it is in that obedience that is disclosed the fallacy of giving your life over to the earthly and therefore the possibility of deciding to be responsible to God and for the world rather than responsible to the world.

15. Concerning this obedience, Gogarten has two points. First of all, God sends him. God does this. Man does not do this. Man is trapped in the power of the earthly. Man cannot break out. He is sentenced to doom. It is God who does this. I translate "God sends him" as referring to the man who decides that he's elected to be responsible to God and not to the earthly.

16. The second point is that Jesus willingly offers himself. Jesus willingly decides to be the obedient one. This obedient one, by submitting himself to the curse of the worldly power and, in the midst of that, being responsible to God and not to the earthly, is the one who destroys the power of the earthly.

17. When, Christ, then, lives the life of the doomed one, that is to say, when he becomes sin, when he becomes the cursed one and lives the life that doomed one, but then lives it as significant, as a gift of God, as one who willingly submits to having his creaturely existence on his hands, it is then that the lie that creation is God is shattered. And man has the possibility of a new decision on his hands, and has the possibility of living in the transformed world.

18. Now, Gogarten's point simply is that it is this event of Jesus' obedience which is the historical event, which is the basis of the kerygma. And then you take any thing else, for instance the resurrection and the crucifixion, and life and teachings: all of that is the manifestation of this one event, the obedience of Jesus. All of that is to be interpreted under the aegis of this one event, the obedience of Jesus. Then he raises the question, is that historical? And what he means by historical is someone who lives in the world subject to the necessity of making decisions, of being involved, of acting of deciding. This is basically an existential definition. Now, Jesus showed up in this situation subject to the necessity of making decisions: therefore, his is a historical man. The historical event is that in the midst of that he was obedient.

19. Gogarten dismisses the notion that you believe in the stories, or that the kerygma is built on the notion that something happened. Obviously something happened 2000 years ago, and the face of the world has been changed. Some theologians say that that

is where you base your faith, that there really was some historical happening that went on. He says no to that. This is not the basis of the kerygma. The basis fo the kerygma and the sole content of the kerygma is this event, the obedience of Jesus. The activity of Jesus being responsible to God and for the world is the sole historical event upon which the kerygma is built. Now obviously that is not historically observable. How do you observe some man's obedience? How do you factually document some man's obedience to God? He wipes off the notion that you have some historical observable facts as the basis of the kerygma.

20. The only way that this event is discernable is through the eyes of faith. Only the everys of faith can see the obedience of Jesus, and it's only the faith which, in the act of seeing the obedience of Jesus, recreates that obedience. This is the crux of the matter. It's when the eyes of faith perceive the obedience of Jesus to God rather than to the world that that obedience is recreated in you and I and therefore we become the obedient ones who repent on behalf of the rest of the world. Just believing that something happened 2000 years ago doesn't do a thing in terms of you assuming responsibility for the world. What creates or recreates the obedience that breaks the lie, what creates the Christ event that destroys this illusion about life is when you and I perceive the obedience of Jesus and in that perception become the obedient one. And then thereby become the one who dies on behalf of or for the world.

21. This gives me a new appreciation of H. Richard Niebhur's paper on the Church where he says that your job is to reduplicate the deed of Christ. Earlier he talks in the paper of Jesus as being the first born in obedience. Your calling and my calling is to be the one who recreates this event in our lives in the perception of that event through faith. And this is the salvation story, and this is the historicity of the New Testament christology.

George West