XXIII. World Federalism and Ecumenical Christianity

Christian Universalism was reinforced by the universalism of the later Stoics, who created the ideal of an all-embracing city of reason—cosmopolis. Mediaeval Christians couched their universalist outlook in Hellenic terms. Thus two streams of thought, from Israel and Greece, flowed together. As a result the world today, although divided among nations often ferociously self-righteous and jealous, is haunted by the vision of a global community. —Glenn Tinder, “Can We Be Good Without God?”

History will not wait... Communist Europe [is] exploding before our eyes... Events are accelerating... We must also accelerate ... and put in place institutions capable of assuming the exigencies linked to our external responsibilities.... A qualitative leap is necessary, both in our conception of the Community and in our modes of external action. —Jacques Delors, President, European Common Market, Speech delivered Oct. 17, 1989

[We support] an European Federal Union for the European Community’s economic policies, [and also] a wider federation of democracies—at least the whole Atlantic Community, including Europe, the U.S., and Canada for common decisions in foreign policy and defense. —Rudolf Wagner, Planning Committee for the Security of the Atlantic Community, May, 1992

The unity to which we are called is a koinonia [community] given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to all people to the gospel of God’s grace and serving the whole of creation. The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one
another the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. —Declaration of the Faith and Order Commission, Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, Australia, Feb. 7-20, 1991

It is only in love that human freedom arrives at its truth. I am free and feel myself to be truly free when I am respected and recognized by others and when I for my part respect and recognize them.... The alienation of person from person, the division between human society and nature, the dichotomy between soul and body, and finally, religious anxiety are abolished; liberation is experienced when people are again one: one with each other, one with nature, and one with God.
—Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom

Abstractions, in spite of the occasional vilification they receive, can be a great help in intellectual analysis. They allow us to temporarily put aside distracting and less important differences and concentrate on essential features. But abstractions can also be the things that one proverbially “gets lost in.” We have been discussing both democracy and the “kingdom of God” in the abstract. But of course there is no democracy in the abstract, but only a variety of nation-states that call themselves “democracies” with varying degrees of accuracy, and some international organizations adhering to some extent to what are considered to be democratic principles and/or procedures. And there is no “kingdom of God” or Christianity in the abstract, but only a variety of churches, denominations, and confessions that call themselves “Christian” and, as we have seen, exemplify a wide variety of interpretations of, and variations on, the Judaeo-Christian idea of a “kingdom of God”. A question naturally emerges: Should we be satisfied with this lush and bewildering variety; or look forward, still dissatisfied, to an eventual concrete, worldwide unity, such that democracy would reign not only within individual nations but in a world federation, and Christianity would exist as one Church rather than “the churches” or “the denominations”?

WORLD FEDERALISM

A worldwide democratic federation seems on initial consideration to be almost a contradiction in terms. This is because “world