Book 6

Sunday January 2, 1978

"HEADLINES OF THE FUTURE"

As we noted in the introduction to the various scripture readings, the Bible is filled with visions and hopes for the future.

IN fact the central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.

In the Old Testament, Israel has a vision of all people drawn into community around the will of its God. In the New Testament, the church has a parallel vision of all persons being drawn under the lordship and fellowship of Jesus and therefore into a single community.

As if those visions were not sweeeping enough, the most staggering expression of the vision is that all persons are children of a single family, members of a single tribe, heirs of a single hope and bearers of a single destiny, namely the care and management of all of God's creation.

Like the hopes and visions for the future that we have, the Biblical writers dream in concrete specific terms. They look for a "well-being" that exists in the very midst of threats--from sword and drought, and from wild animals. It is a well-being of a material, physical, historical kind, not idyllic "pie in the sky," but "salvation" in the midst of trees and crops and enemies--in the very places where people always have to cope with anxiety, struggle for survival, and deal with temptation. It is a well-being of a personsal kind as well as a well-being for the whole community

Always we are all in it together. Together we stand before God's blessings and together we receive the gift of life--young and old, rich and poor, powerful and dependent. Furthermore the well-being only comes to us when we live a caring, sharing, joyous life in community.

The Bible is not romantic about its vision. It never assumes that harmony and peace will come naturally or automatically. There are many ways we human beings have of compromising or slowing down God's will for harmony and peace.

1. First of all, we can simply say "no" to God, "no" to the vision and hope and deceive ourselves that we can make our own private arrangements of injustice. We can believe that we are sufficient unto ourselves--that we need no one else.

2. We can also pervert the vision by taking a short term view by bargaining the future for present accomodation. Sometimes, for example, parents pile up debts of hatred and abuse for their children to pay off. Or we can say to ourselves now: "We are going to use oil and coal and water without any thought for conservation." "We're going to get what we can without any thought for the future. But caring for creation is never a one-generation deal. Someone will have to pay for our wastefulness.

3. A third way of working against harmony and peace is to worship false gods; for example to idolize political or religious furniture and pretend it is the power of God.

But what are our headlines for the future?