

Christians for an Ethical Society

Jesus and Social Inclusion

1. Who is my neighbour?

‘If you do good, know to whom you do it,
and you will be thanked for your good deeds.
Do good to the devout, and you will be repaid—
if not by them, certainly by the Most High.
No good comes to one who persists in evil
or to one who does not give alms.
Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner.
Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly;
hold back their bread, and do not give it to them,
for by means of it they might subdue you;
then you will receive twice as much evil
for all the good you have done to them.
For the Most High also hates sinners
and will inflict punishment on the ungodly.
Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner’ (Sirach 12:1-8).

‘Two nations my soul detests,
and the third is not even a people:
Those who live in Seir, and the Philistines,
and the foolish people that live in Shechem’ (Sirach 50:25-26).

‘Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans’ (John 4:9).

- See the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), and the narrative of the Woman at the well. (John 4)

2. Lepers (Outsiders, marginalised)

“The person who has the scaly skin disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp’ (Leviticus 13:45-46).

- Jesus and the Leper (Mark 1)

3. Sinners

‘No one who practices deceit
shall remain in my house;
no one who utters lies
shall continue in my presence’ (Psalm 101:7)

Jesus eating with ‘sinners’

4. Eunuchs and foreigners

‘Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say,
“The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;
and do not let the eunuch say,
“I am just a dry tree.”
For thus says the LORD:
To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

¶ And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.
Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered’ (Isaiah 56:3-8).

‘You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.’
You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!
(John 7:8-9)

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free’ (Luke 4:18),

‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery **against her**’ (Mark 10:11).

‘Let the little children come to me. Do not stop them’ (Mark 10:14).

‘The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.
Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the Sabbath.’
(John 5:15-16)

‘If **anyone** is thirsty, come to me’ (John 7:37).

‘**Anyone** who follows me will have the light of life’ (John 8:12).

‘Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.’

Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on”(Mark 12:41-44).

Appendix: Salvation is offered to all

I. Second Vatican Council

1. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium 1964)

‘The effect of the Church’s mission is that whatever good is found sown in people’s minds and hearts or in the rites and customs of peoples, these are not only preserved from destruction, but are purified, elevated and perfected for the glory of God’(§17).

2. Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes 1965).

‘The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts, for theirs is a community composed of men and women. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for everyone’(§1).

‘Linked with the paschal mystery and patterned on the dying Christ, the Christian will hasten forward to resurrection in the strength which comes from hope. All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way.

For, since Christ died for all people, and since the ultimate vocation of every person is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to everyone the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.

Such is the mystery of the human person, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us.

Christ has risen,
destroying death by His death;
He has lavished life upon us so that, as ‘sons’ in the Son,
we can cry out in the Spirit ‘Abba, Father’(§22).

‘The Risen Christ is now at work in human hearts through the power of his Spirit, not only arousing in them a desire for the world to come but also thereby animating, purifying and reinforcing the noble aspirations which drive the human family to make its life one that is more human and to direct the whole earth to this end’(§38)

II. Pope Paul VI

Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975).

‘It would be useful if every Christian and every evangeliser were to pray about the following thought: people can gain salvation also in other ways by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame – what Saint Paul called “blushing for the Gospel”(Romans 1:16) – or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God, who wishes the seed to bear fruit through the voice of the ministers of the Gospel; and it will depend on us whether this grows into trees and produces its full fruit’ (§80).

John-Paul II

The Mission of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Missio 1990)

‘The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions. For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation (he then quotes GS 22)’ (§10).

‘The Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the “seeds of the Word”, to be found in human initiatives – including religious ones – and in the human effort to attain truth, goodness and God himself ... The Spirit is at the very source of people's existential and religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of what it is to be human ... “The Risen Christ is now at work in human hearts through the power of his Spirit, not only instilling a desire for the world to come but also thereby animating, purifying and reinforcing the noble aspirations which drive the human family to make its life one that is more human and to direct the whole earth to this end”(GS 38). It is the Spirit who sows the 'seeds of the Word' present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ’ (§28).

‘We must have respect for human beings in their quest for answers to the deepest questions of life, and respect for the action of the Holy Spirit in people ... Every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit who is mysteriously present in every human heart’ (§29).

‘God does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain gaps, insufficiencies and errors ... The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people’ (§55).

‘Dialogue with those of other religions is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills’ (§56).