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GOD'S HIDDEN REVOLUTION

NEW YEAR MESSAGE BY THE REV. CLAUDE REVERDIN

*The old has passed away, behold,
the new has come . . .*

II Corinthians 5:17

What an utopian declaration! For the past 2,000 years this text has been read and re-read and constantly offered to our thoughts and meditation. But where is the "new" of which it speaks?

At the end of 1971, this assertion by the apostle Paul almost appears derisory and the Ecclesiastes seems far nearer the truth when he says:

*What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what
will be done
and there is nothing new under
the sun.*

The year 1971 has compelled us, once again, to conclude that force has reason over justice and that real freedom remains an exceptional luxury. Men are arbitrarily thrown into jail and a mockery made of their rights in America, Russia, Spain, South-East Asia, South Africa, Greece and in countless other places. Always the same thing!

The rejection of the freedom of self-expression, the impossibility for multitudes to live where they choose, the right of the powerful, the contempt of minority opinions: There is nothing "new" in all this.

Just as former dictatorships, those of today spread their evil in every continent. Violence has burst out throughout the whole year and disfigured faces, tortured bodies, mutilated families and left everywhere its sequel of suffering.

Everywhere men rise against fellow men.

Everywhere human relations are spoilt.

The problem of human relations—a fundamental problem, a problem which remains without a solution. It is not solved civically, it is not solved racially, it is not solved socially, it is not solved in our own lives.

Which one of us has succeeded in all his personal relations throughout this year? Which one of us has overcome with intelligence and feeling the domestic tensions, the professional strifes, the political and religious struggles in which he has been involved?

Which one of us has not often betrayed the respect which is due to every person he has met throughout the year by a gesture of impatience, a sharp tone of the voice, a condemning silence or a look of contempt? Which one of us has known how to create living, friendly, just and free human relationships in every circumstance?



Chartres

There is injustice at the level of the state and mass violence. There is a more secret injustice casting its shadow within our own lives. The small injustice making way for the big one.

And this has been going on for centuries.

Really, "there is nothing new under the sun, and what has been done is what will be done".

What will the coming year keep in store for us? Will we again be witness to an escalation of hatred, violence and lack of understanding?

I do not know. But what I do know is that the Word is there, crystal clear and unequivocal: "The old has passed away, behold, the new has come . . ."

To belie the old adage of the Ecclesiastes, to escape from the burden of the past and break the fatality of troubled, unaccomplished and broken human relationships there is one way only: to learn anew every day the wondrous freedom of God giving his love to each human being, whatever his opinions, his ideology and his acts.

A fundamental attitude contrary to all our instinctive reactions. The reversal of all our thinking habits and spontaneous behaviour. Probably the only real revolution—the only one capable of transforming human relationships. The only one that does not solve problems in violence and blood. God's revolution. "All this is from God", continues verse 18, and indeed the Revolution is far too serious for God to leave us with the initiative. He knows that we are incapable of breaking the vicious circle of oppression which gives rise to revolt, and revolt in turn using injustice before having established justice. This is why God has come to give us a truth which we have not invented—the truth of reconciliation.

Through Christ, God has come to tell us that we can condemn untruth and reject injustice without casting away those who commit these things, who are blind and make mistakes.

Through Christ, God has told us that it is possible to forgive even those who have condemned us and deprived us of the right to live. It is nailed to his cross that Christ cried out: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do".

This strength of reconciliation, more manly than revolt, can remain free and human to the end. It is this strength which enables us to renew our relations with our fellow men.

There are people to whom we feel close because they think like we do. We appreciate them for their ideas.

For everything to be new, however, we have to learn to love those whose opinions are opposite to ours. We must learn to love them despite their ideas and their sometimes incomprehensible actions.

This is the seed of new life sown by Christ in the world.

With the Spirit of Christ it becomes possible to respect the other man and woman fully, whatever their way of life. Because Christ has lived in true freedom and has offered it to us, this freedom and the freedom which we allow others to enjoy becomes a reality of this world.

1972 now lies before us. For each one of us these coming 12 months will be alive with many encounters, personal relations in our families and in our work. If we approached each day with the word which only God can put into us, the word of reconciliation, then we would have to agree that something new had emerged in our lives and in our society. We would then also speak of a renewal come once and for all, this very renewal announced at every Christmas.

*Therefore, if any one is in Christ,
he is in new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come.
All this from God, who through Christ reconciled us to him and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*