

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Need for New Categories **Transfiguration of the Lord/A** Wednesday, August 6, 2014
8:15 AM Dn 7:9-10, 13-14; **2 Pt 1:16-19**; **Mt 17:1-9** (There is a duality in an
experience of God, an attraction and a repulsion.)

There was in Judaism a long tradition of mysticism, but **by the time of Christ** this tradition was being pushed away in favor of a sort of devotion to the Law that went along with basically **a worldly understanding of religion, God, people, covenant, everything**—a worldly understanding: in other words, focused on this world, this earth, and therefore political. The agitation of that time was an agitation that was based on the desire for independence from Roman rule. **The awaited Messiah was supposed to deliver them from Roman rule.**

The deeper spiritual dimensions of reality and of life, the mystery of life, the mystery of God, was not focused upon. It's almost as if it was too much to think about and too distant and, yes, irrelevant. The apostles themselves were very much affected by this. **Peter and James and John were brought up to the mountain for revelation.**

It is clear that James and John and their mother were all thinking in very worldly terms about **this kingdom of God that Jesus was announcing**. And so she comes and says, "I want my sons to sit at your right and your left." Well, that itself is a very pitiful misunderstanding of what this is all about. It's not about sitting. It's not about presiding. It's not about this world at all. **It's not about any categories that we ordinarily think in.** It's something else. And **that's why Jesus led these three up the mountain to show them it's about something else: categories that they had never thought about. He showed them and God spoke to them.**

Now it is very interesting. Their reaction is very different. The sight is something attractive. **Jesus transfigured is very attractive to the disciples.** Peter says, "Oh, it's good

to be here. I will build a tent. You and Moses and Elijah and all of us, we can stay here.” But then **God spoke. That was frightening.** Why the difference? You can think about it. But there is this **duality in an experience of God, an attraction and a repulsion; something fascinating and intriguing, and something fearful and foreboding.** Both are part of experiencing God. God is not just one little thing we can think about. God is something beyond us. A true experience of God is both tremendous and fascinating: tremendous in the sense of fearsome, fascinating in the sense of very attractive. So we are talking about **something that is far deeper** than the categories we normally think of and the categories which actually our religion normally deals with. We tend to just ignore thinking about these things. We don’t know where to go. Well **there is nowhere to go except to God.**

Now the second reading today, the Second Letter of Peter made it very clear. “Moreover, **we possess the prophetic message** that is altogether reliable. You will do well to **be attentive to it**”—that’s sound advice—“as to a lamp shining in a dark place”—dark place, that’s the world, that’s the world of human thought; even our brightest intellectual leaders today: scientists, politicians, leaders, whatever you call them, mostly in darkness—“until the day dawns”—this day is not an ordinary day. **This day dawning means until the light comes to you.** The message is words, ideas. They are all we have to go on now until the day dawns. That comes to different people at different times. **It’s something to pray for and to wait for—the dawning of the day when it all starts to make sense because God has come to us.** “And the morning star rises in your hearts.” It’s not about the morning star rising in the horizon; **it’s the morning star rising in your hearts that brings light within you.** That’s what we need. Then we can share in whatever Peter and James and John saw in the Transfiguration of Christ.