



April 9, 2008

Plato, a pupil of Socrates, in his book *Republic* demonstrates his well-known and powerful image of the human condition in terms of an analogy of a cave. An ordinary human being is likened to a prisoner in a cave who is forced to gaze on shadows. The human being has to strive to see the light which brings the illumination of the truth. According to Plato, there is a spiritual movement turning around from the shadows of the cave toward the light of the illuminating sun. In this story of the cave, a human soul is highly appreciated in its journey to the sun while devaluing the human body. An understanding of the truth is articulated through the idea of immortality of soul without connection to the socially embodied life.

Around the time of Plato, in China there lived a philosopher called Zhuangzi, a student of Laozi. He talked about his dream of a butterfly. Let me quote. “I once dreamed that I was a butterfly fluttering here and there. I was so pleased that I forgot that I was Zhuangzi. When I suddenly woke up, I was astonished to find that I was as a matter of fact Zhuangzi. Did Zhuangzi dream of the butterfly or did the butterfly dream of Zhuangzi? Between Zhuangzi and the butterfly there must be some distinctions. This is called the transformation of things.” Zhuangzi advocates for human life to come back to the nature in which the transformation of things can happen. “Do not attach yourself to the social historical life. Your rationality is not enough to understand the truth which comes to us as transformation of things.” This is a different wisdom that comes to us from China rather than Plato.

If Plato endorses the soul’s ascent to the truth, if Zhuangzi advocates the nature as the truth of human life, the scripture begins with the resurrection of the body. With his death on the cross at Golgotha, the history of Jesus was not finally ended and written off. In his resurrection we confess that God’s faithfulness abides even in and beyond death. God’s faithfulness and commitment to Jesus Christ is the basis of our faith in the resurrection of the

body. Jesus Christ is not the obviously immortal one, but the crucified one who is risen. God has called to life and resurrection the whole person.

In his gospel, John states that Jesus appears to his disciples. As the sun was rising, Jesus stood at the water's edge, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to the men who were fishing in vain. "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some. So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish." What fascinates me in this story is Jesus Christ's concern about the material life of his disciples. Jesus' resurrection has a connection with our socially embodied life. We know in Jesus' prayer, a petition "give us today our daily bread."

God's kingdom and bread belong together. The risen Christ also demonstrates his concern in the material life. In contemporary theology, unfortunately, Christian references to the resurrection have been "demythologized," interpreted as referring to nothing more than personal communion with God in faith. Interpreted in this way, the message of resurrection no longer provides inspiration for the struggle, the struggle against domination by the death, the struggle against murder and oppression of human beings by other human beings, whether on a large or a small scale. The Christian message of the resurrection of the body points to the eschatological event of Jesus Christ in which the kingdom of God has begun.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his 1932 lecture addressed that loving earth and God are in one. "Wanderers love the earth that carries them, yet love it only because in it they meet the foreign land that they love above all things, since otherwise they would not be wanderers. Only those who wander thus, who love earth and God in one, can believe in the kingdom of God." For Bonhoeffer our faith-wandering corresponds to God's kingdom when we love earth and God in one. Without loving our earth, we cannot believe in God's kingdom. Without loving God, we cannot believe in the resurrection of the body. St Paul's theology of the Word of the Cross (1 Cor 1: 18) structures his theology of the cross in a way that he sees all life under the sign of death. Furthermore, his theology of the cross affirms St. John's theology of life. The Word of the cross includes the proclamation of the Logos as the light of the life for all people. Here we see an inseparable connection between the theology of the cross and the theology of the resurrection. The new life is the life coming out of the living God. Here we ascribe freedom as a definition of God. The freedom of God also has another meaning, which implies setting us free: liberation. The liberation is the reality which proclaims the freedom by setting us free.

Freedom and life of liberation belong together. The eternal life which has begun in the resurrection of Jesus Christ implies that God constantly shares God's life with us through the Word and Holy Spirit. This is a basis for a

theology of the Christian faith and hope in the resurrection of the body unlike Plato or Zhuangzi. This faith in hope is oriented for the new world and the new humanity in expectation of the new heaven and earth, rather than limited to mystical concentration on God and soul or individualistic pietism. The eternal life which God shares with us is the life presented and liberated by God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. As the justified children of God, we proceed into God's life for the sake of serving the fellow people in need. Theology of the cross is not simply a narrative of Golgotha-event, but it speaks of the eschatological event of the resurrection of a crucified Jesus whom God had made into the power of God (1 Cor 1: 18).