

Chapter 6: A World in Crisis Needs Abba

In the human acknowledgement of Abba Cobb hopes to find a solution to the problems the world is facing.

1. History is a series of moments in which each new moment is shaped by its past and anticipates possibilities for the future. The traditions of Abraham all have scriptures that indicate God has a history. These Scriptures report that God has been involved in shaping and even directing the course of events. The understanding of God has changed over time, but God continues to be very concerned about what happens in history. Abba, as Jesus reveals, wishes to relieve the suffering of individuals by having them join a community in which God's Spirit creatively transforms life.

History has its dark side as well. Christians persecuted those of other traditions, and advocated killing heretics or infidels; crusades were started to eliminate dissent; and Christianity often became idolatrously aligned with nationalism. History is often the story told by the powerful, while the oppressed are not heard. While Christianity has been responsible for many terrible crimes against humanity, it is also given the world great hope and direction through leaders such as Gandhi and King.

The liberal church has given up serious study of the Bible, and have turned to psychology and sociology for its understanding of life instead. It has lost its historical consciousness. The church's loss also occurs in the schools where history is no longer studied in any depth. The warning is that if we don't learn from history, we will become its victims. What is needed is to recover the story of Abba and the message of love.

2. Cobb opposes two popular views of God's power: one is the notion of God's omnipotence and the other is what is called "free will" theism. If God is thought to be omnipotent, then God must be responsible for evil since God has all power. This kind of power turns God into a tyrant. Some liberals and evangelicals protect God's goodness by arguing that God self-limits his use of power. Since God wishes to preserve human freedom and responsibility, God has decided not to intervene in world events. Therefore he is not responsible for the evils that humans commit. But if God actually has the power and does not intervene in situations like the Holocaust, then God does not act like a loving father. Any parent who actually has the power to

stop his children from becoming involved in a disaster would take action.

Consequently, “free will theism” does not describe Abba. For Cobb, God does not have coercive power. Rather God exercises empowering or liberating power. God is not in total control of what happens, because everything that exists has its own power, even the power to resist God.

3. The Lord's Prayer asks for God's Commonwealth to be enacted on earth. This community would empower individuals to act freely and wisely, and to support one another for the common good. It would seem to meet the basic needs of all its members, and work to free people from a crushing debt system. While the ideal commonwealth does not exist, Cobb provides some examples from his own life that have benefited him. The community inspired by Abba would be grounded in love, justice, peace and sustainability.

4. The Lord's Prayer gives special attention to the needs of the poor, and in Jesus's teachings he warns those who were attached to wealth. Yet Jesus did not offer any economic theories. Responsible uses of money and resources are central to establishing the Commonwealth of God. Some scholars believe that Jesus advocated a Jubilee year, which would free all Israelites from debt. In a capitalist system the abuse of money and the inequality between rich and poor can foster a crisis. Cobb supports two steps to move toward economic justice: one is for governments to quit borrowing large sums of money from banks and pay off their debts; the other is for governments to provide sufficient services so that its citizens will not have to borrow money to pay for its necessities.

5. It is not clear how those committed to Abba would restructure the political order-- Jesus never spoke about this. There is no one political system that guarantees the establishment of God's Commonwealth. What system might work at one time in history, or in one geographical area, may not work in **another** time or place. The conflict between communities also makes the Commonwealth difficult to achieve. Human sinfulness, the tendency of individual and collective egotism to seek their own self-interest, often hinders the search for peace and justice. Abba has no place for “we” and “them.” God expects all communities to work together for the common good. This is one reason why a rededication to the God of Jesus is essential.

6. A global crisis that threatens the death of the planet is the background for the subject of this book. Those who think God will not let this earth be destroyed assume God has coercive power to prevent humans from their folly. God could not stop Jesus from being crucified, and God cannot stop humans from horrible decisions. Humans have the freedom to destroy themselves. That is why the times are so crucial for wise action to be taken. To dedicate oneself to Abba is to choose life over death. Pope Francis has tried to change the political discourse on climate change, but the enemies of life have great power. It is too late to stop massive suffering, but heeding Abba's call to live together in love and harmony is what is needed to counteract the forces of death at work in the world.