Clergy Conference

Ephesians 2: 1-10

Our aim for the conference is to help people to understand more clearly the interface between the

church and the secular world, and to discover how we can be more effective in bridging the gaps.

The imminent return of Jesus is turning out to be not so imminent after all. So Paul begins to talk about a realised eschatology - about the idea that we are already saved - that we live out our salvation in the world in which we live. So in this sense, we are about attempting to work out how we live a saved life in the midst of the determinedly unsaved world - how we live in a faith paradigm while present in a world which implicitly or sometimes explicitly denies that.

I spent much of my life in a highly charged religious atmosphere in which people talked easily about what it means to be saved. That mindset is about the snatching brands from the burning - a radical difference between the saved and the unsaved world. Yet I have always believed that our anglican way is different from that - we aren't in or out, sheep and goats people. We live with fuzzy and permeable boundaries. People move across those boundaries in both directions on their personal journey of faith and exploration

But I think that we are talking about what it feels like in our terms to live this life in the world of today. It plays into the questions about whether we are 'world accommodating' or 'world refusing' - how radical is the difference between our mindset and that of the world.

And I think again that what this means is that Gods saving presence in our lives creates a fundamental change in our DNA - that we see the world from a different perspective; that we see it in a different way and that we may reach different conclusions about it.

We aren't offering a kind of religious product - an add on - to the world. What I find strangest is that, while the world would like us to believe that all is secular calm, the reality is very different from that. The reality is about sin, death, human failure and loss - issues for which by definition secular society has very little response.

But what we do is to cross the permeable boundaries of the world in its need - bringing healing, love and the way of peace - in the name of Christ.