

BUILDING A NEW WORLD ORDER
|| A Perspective from Isa. 11:6-9

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Many hypotheses have been proffered today on how to build a New World Order. Experience shows that the dream of a New World Order is far from coming true, probably, because the proper relationships between nations have not been established. The longing however continues because there is found in every human being that craving for a harmonious and peaceful life together with others and the universe at large. The quest is even more intense in times of chaos, when often there arises a general optimism for a future return to the lost glorious period. Many ancient cultures have shown in stories, folklore, myths, etc. evidence of a remembrance of a glorious primordial period, real or imaginary. Rather than just recall a paradisiac period, Isaiah stretches his imagination to depict a world of friendly and harmonious relationships, composed of God's creatures (humans, animals, reptiles) that are otherwise antithetically related. Indeed, the prophet's imagination goes beyond his peculiar situation and time to our world much conceived as a disordered and divided world.

Because of its rich and peculiar imagery Isa. 11: 6-9 in its context has become one of those prophetic oracles that have captured the keen interest of many scholars in history. It has created opportunities for all kinds of interpretations. The key to the application of the text, I suppose, is the prophet's refusal to adopt an outright comparative or metaphorical approach in presenting the creatures in the oracle. He simply chooses to depict a situation, a harmonious relationship between different creatures. The aim of this essay is to see what message the prophet wants to communicate with this imagery and to examine how we can make the message bear on the efforts towards building a New World Order. It will go about this by examining what made the relationship cordial and harmonious and by contrasting the events of our present world order with it. By making Isa. 11:6-9 relevant to the here-and-now situation it is hoped that more awareness could be created of God's original plan for the universe, namely that all his creatures without distinction should live in peaceful harmony (cf. Gen 1:26- 31).

Isa. 11:6-9 and Other Ancient Traditions

Apart from the Old Testament that has in several other instances expressed the idea of the renewal of the paradisiac conditions at creation, when humans and other animals would live in peace (Hos 2:20[18]) and animals themselves live in perfect harmony (Isa. 65: 25, Job 5: 22-23), our study detects that there recur in many different ancient cultures stories and myths, which paint idyllic situations such as the one we read in Isa. 11:6-9. They describe a primordial period of peace and harmonious coexistence among created things.

In a Sumerian myth, *Enki and Ninhursag* (ANET, 38), the land of Dilmun is described as a land in which "the raven utters no cries... the lion kills not, the wolf snatches not the lamb, unknown is the kid-devouring wild dog..." Another myth, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, recalls a "golden age" thus: "Once upon a time, there was no snake, there was no scorpion, there was no hyena, there was no lion, there was no wild dog, no wolf, there was no fear, no terror, man had no rival."¹ According to the Akkadian epic of *Gilgamesh*, there was once a

¹ Cf. H. Gross, *Die Idee des ewigen und allgemeinen Weltfriedens im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* Trier: Paulinus Verlag 1956, 24; also G.J. Botterweck "z"ēbh" in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)* IV, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans 1980, 1-7, 3.

harmonious life together between Enkidu and animals. We read: "With the gazelles he feeds on grass, with the wild beasts he drinks at the watering place, with the creeping creatures his heart delights in water."² The Arabian and Persian writers envisaged such a peaceful harmony in the universe when a great and good king reigned. Firdusi in his *Book of Kings* found one such ruler in "Mahmoud the powerful king, the ruler of the world to whose tank the wolf and the lamb come together to drink."

Outside the ancient Near Eastern texts, the poets of the Greco-Roman world portrayed in various texts a golden age when the wild beasts grow tame; serpents and poisonous herbs become harmless. In fact, Theocritus (*Idyll* 24:84) holds: "There shall be a time when the ravenous wolf shall see the kid lying at ease, and shall feel no desire to do it an injury." From Virgil (*Eclogue* 4:22) we read: "Nor shall the flocks fear the great lions" and from his *Georgics* (3:537-539): "The nightly wolf that round the enclosure prowled, to leap the fence, now plots not on the fold: Tamed with a sharper pain, the fearful doe and flying stag amidst the greyhounds go; and round the dwellings roam, of man their former foe."³

The Sibylline Oracles (lines 788-795) paint the harmonious situation thus:

*Wolves and lambs will eat grass together in the mountains.
Leopards will feed together with kids. Roving bears will spend the
night with calves. The flesh-eating lion will eat husks at the
manger like an ox, and mere infant children will lead them with
ropes. For he will make the beasts on earth harmless. Serpents and
asps will sleep with babies and will not harm them, for the hand of
God will be upon them.*⁴

One may wonder why this motif is not expressly found in Egyptian literature. The reason could be that ancient Egypt presumes an original harmonious and peaceful relationship between animals, humans and the gods. The Egyptian mind does not conceive a world in which animals and humans are separated or make sharp distinctions between them. Unlike the Old Testament (Gen 1:26,28-30), Egyptian tradition never ascribed to humans the lordship over animals because they were referred together as "all living (things)" or "all created (things)". In fact, the word 'wt (small livestock) is a collective name for created things, including humans,⁵ showing the common origin human beings share with other created beings. It also indicates that partnership characterises the attitude of humans towards animals and, indeed, every creature.

We have seen that the notion of a primordial period of harmony between created things in the universe was rooted in many ancient cultures. We have also seen that such a state of harmony was lost in the course of time. Like the Old Testament tradition (cf. Gen 1:29-30; 3:15; 9:1-3), some other ancient cultures do not have a clear vision on how to re-establish the pristine state of harmony. Hence they present animals as both partners of human beings as

² However, this situation was short-lived because he lost it immediately he had sexual contact with a prostitute. "Having satisfied himself with the woman, Enkidu turned to rejoin the animals. Seeing him, the gazelles ran off, the beasts of the steppe shied away from him." Cf. V.H. Matthews, D.C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, New York: Paulist Press, 1997, 21. Cf. *ANET*, 75.

³ Cf. A. Clarke, *Isaiah-Malachi* OT Commentary Vol. 4, Albany: Ages Software 1997, 168.

⁴ Cf. J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* I, London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1983, 379. Cf. also Philo, *De Praemiis et Poenis*, 89-90; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7:24 reads: "Lions and calves will stand together at the manger to feed; the wolf will not steal the sheep; the dog will not hunt; hawks and eagles will not do harm; a child will play with snakes" in R. J. Deferrari, et al. eds., *The Fathers of the Church* vol. 49 Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 1964, 531.

⁵ Cf. E. Hornung, "Die Bedeutung des Tieres im alten Ägypten *StudGen* 20 (1967), 69 n.2.

well as their food.⁶ Although African cosmology sees the universe as an integrated whole in which the life of each created being (animate or inanimate) and that of the deity is unique as well as connected with others, it is not free from the dilemma. African mythology does not put humans, animals and plants on a par with each other.⁷ It does not even envisage a future period of harmonious existence between them because it conceives the world as moving in "immortal regenerative cycles of birth, death and rebirth." In fact, some early Greek poets and philosophers would see such partnership and harmonious coexistence between humans and animals as inconceivable.⁸

Not in few instances does the OT propose extreme actions, elimination of wild animals, as a way of restoring the primordial harmony (cf. Isa. 35:9, Ezk 34:25, Lev 26:6). In fact, it is a major factor in the Sumerian view on the golden age, where wild animals and reptiles are either to be eliminated or their nature transformed.⁹ Plato goes even further to say "one does not need to change vicious animals but to remove them."¹⁰

In all this, there are marked differences between Isa 11: 6-9 and the "golden age" myths. While most of them depict the primordial period as that of a cosmos *without* wild animals, *without* danger and anxiety, our text positively depicts a period of total harmony between all created beings (things), when the ferocious animal and its prey live side by side. The exquisite imagery of Isaiah is unequalled; the circumstances and harmonious relationships described and, indeed, the quintessence of the oracle are in the main not touched upon by the ancient myths and, therefore, cannot unqualifiedly be regarded as its origin. To be remarked too is that the animals are presented with no specific attributes. They are neither called wild nor domestic, neither ferocious nor gentle. Rather, the emphasis is on the actions that describe their attitude and relations to each other, a situation in which "a leopard becomes a guest at the house of the lamb." The end result is that there will be no hurt and no cause for destruction in the entire universe (v.9) not because wild animals are eliminated but that a cordial relationship exists.

Isa. 11:6-9 and its history of Interpretation

Isa. 11: 6-9, as we have pointed out, has captured the keen interest of many scholars in history, resulting in various interpretations. For instance, Gunkel believes that Isaiah in this oracle made use of golden age myth, the origin of which was hardly Hebrew.¹¹ According to

⁶ In spite of the equal status ancient Egypt ascribes to all created things, we read from the Instruction to King Merikare, dating back to the Middle Kingdom, although the text is considered to be later addition, that the creator-god made for humans "plants and cattle, fowl and fish to feed them". Cf. E. Hornung, "Die Bedeutung des Tieres, 70; M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature (AEL)* I, Berkeley: University of California Press 1975, 106; J.D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1997, 70.

⁷ Two myths from Mende, Sierra Leone highlight this view. The one describes a primordial period when the creator god shared a common life with animals and humans (cf. B. Abanuka, *Myth and the African Universe*, Enugu: Snaap Press 1999, 67-68), the other a period when human beings were said to be lower than animals in creativity at the lost of primordial state (ibid. 86-87).

⁸ This is specially true in the great Homeric poems, *Eliade* and *Odyssey* that constantly portrayed animals and humans in a way that only emphasised their fundamental differences. Cf. F.M Heichelheim, T. Elliot, "Das Tier in der Vorstellungswelt der Griechen" *StudGen* 20 (1967) 85-89. Some Greek philosophers like Socrates made similar distinctions between humans and animals (Xenophon, *Apology*. 12; *Memorabilia* 1, 1,3-5; 1, 4,11-14); they insisted that animals were made for the need of human beings and, so, had to be disciplined (cf. Xenoph. *Memorab.* IV, 3.10).

⁹ Cf. the two myths, *Enki and Ninhursag* and *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, cited above.

¹⁰ Cf. *Politics*, 271e; *Laws* 735; cf. also *State V*, 459.

¹¹ Cf. H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Apk12*, 2. Göttingen 1926, 13, 16; also H. Gross, *Die Idee*, 105.

Gressmann, the “fantastic hopes” raised by the oracle “have nothing to do in the least with the real experiences of the people of Israel...”¹²

However, it is the allegorical, metaphorical and symbolic methods that have dominated the interpretation of Isa. 11:6-9. The allegorical interpretation was prominent in the early Rabbinic Judaism¹³ and Patristic exegesis. For Clement of Alexandria, the togetherness of the cow and the bear in Isa. 11:7 signifies the unity of the Church¹⁴ made up of Jews and pagans. According to Cyril of Alexandria, the unity enjoyed by the animals (Isa. 11:6) expresses the unity of Israel with idol worshippers and pagans. For him the common food of the lion and the cow is no other but the new doctrine and its efficacy.¹⁵ Following Eusebius, Theodoret of Cyrus also interprets the oracle allegorically. He identifies the unity of the animals with the unity existing between kings, officials and ordinary people in the one church through the same faith and the same baptism.¹⁶ The variant allegorical interpretations show once again that what we have here “is not an imagery to be put so lightly in words.”

Lockshin interprets Isa. 11:6 metaphorically just as most Jewish scholars have done over the years. In his words “Jews hardly expected such gigantic changes in the laws of the world in the perfected messianic world.”¹⁷ H. Wildberger regards the oracle as symbolic because Isaiah employs the language of paradise myth, coated in the image of peace in the animal world, to announce the radical conquest of wickedness and injustice.¹⁸ Some critics see the oracle as a metaphor for either the extinction of enmity in human world, thus initiating world peace¹⁹ or a spiritual regeneration and sanctification of humanity.²⁰ For R. Bartelmus it is the relationship between the wild and domesticated animals or between the serpents and the child that constitutes the metaphor. It depicts the paradisiac condition destroyed by the hybrid behaviour of human beings, which can only be restored at the end-time.²¹ Rather than see the oracle as imaging animals in a biological sense, whereby they are classified into zoological types, Bartelmus maintains that the oracle is concerned with animals, whose behavioural patterns are determined by a peaceful order that is not of this world.²²

The use of the terms figurative, symbolic, metaphoric, etc., by different authors is indicative of the difficulty in grasping the nature of Isa. 11:6-9. The lack of consensus in interpretation, I suppose, derives from a frantic attempt to find “referent” for symbolism or “vehicle” for the metaphor that is not visibly there in the text. As far as the imagery is concerned the image of the wild animals in the oracle is not that of the enemy (which they are

¹² H. Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, Göttingen 1905, 193ff; See H. Gross (*Die Idee*, 105ff) for more details.

¹³ Cf. Philo, *De Praemiis et Poenis*, 89; also V. Buchheit, “Tierfriede bei Hieronymus und seinen Vorgängern”, in E. Dassmann, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 33(1990), 21-35.

¹⁴ Cf. V. Buchheit, “Tierfriede,” 25; also Jerome, in *Isaiah* 11: 6-9.

¹⁵ Cf. *The Commentary on Isaiah* in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 70, 320-5.

¹⁶ Cf. *Interpretatio in Isaiam*, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 81, 316. He holds also that 11:6 teaches “both the diversity of characters and the harmony of faith.” (cf. *Immutable: Dialogue One* Trans. G.H. Ettliger, in T.P. Halton, et. al. eds., in *The Fathers of the Church* (New Translation) vol 106 Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 2003, 56.

¹⁷ M.I. Lockshin, “Pursuing Opportunities for Shalom in the World: A Jewish View,” in A.W. Dorn, ed., *World Order for a New Millennium. Political, Cultural and Spiritual Approaches to Building Peace*, New York: St. Martin’s Press 1999, 186-195, 194.

¹⁸ Cf. *Jesaja* BKAT 10/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn ²1980, 457, 460.

¹⁹ Cf. M. Buber, *Der Glaube der Propheten*, Heidelberg ²1984, 188; E.J. Kissane, *The book of Isaiah* 1, Dublin, 1941, 143.

²⁰ Cf. P. Heinisch, *Die Idee der Heidenbekehrung im AT*, Biblische Zeitfragen, Münster, 1916, 42.

²¹ Cf. “Die Tierwelt in der Bibel II”, in B. Janowski, ed., *Gefährten und Feinde der Menschen. Das Tier in der Lebenswelt des alten Israel*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993, 283-306, 304-305.

²² *Ibid.* 287.

by nature) but that of a friend. Hence the harmonious relationship between one-time incompatible partners.

Understanding the focus of the oracle has also constituted a major problem to the interpretation of the text. While some authors take the oracle as a return to lost paradisiac peace of the primordial period,²³ others see it as figure of the end-time, or even of a new covenant.²⁴ All we can say is that no imagery of the golden age, biblical or extra-biblical, was in its overall context as all-inclusive and elaborate as Isaiah's painting in this oracle. However, majority of views relate the oracle to the future either as a) an eschatological renewal of the golden age/primordial period²⁵ or b) a fulfilment of messianic promise.²⁶

It is not exegetes and biblical scholars alone who have attempted to interpret this oracle; artists have also clearly expressed the text in paintings and carvings, some of which dating back to the early Christian period.²⁷ Other works of art include some stone-carvings in the apse of the Cathedral of Speyer and the famous painting of Edward Hicks (1780-1849), "The Peaceable Kingdom", which depicts "an archetypal image of unfallen nature in the American Eden."²⁸ We also find in more recent times the fascinating paintings of Marc Chagall²⁹ and Richard Seewald,³⁰ vividly illustrating Isaiah's imagery for a harmonious relations in the world.

Isa. 11:6-9 in Proto-Isaiah's Messianic Oracles

The oracle of Isa. 11:6-9 is not directly included among certain passages in the Old Testament known as Messianic.³¹ Opinions are divided about not only the historical background of the text, but also the authenticity of its authorship by Isaiah, having been identified as a secondary material in relation to 11:1-5.³² The major argument advanced to explain the late origin of 11:6-9 hinges on the seeming contradiction between v.4, which hints at the elimination of the wicked and oppressor (cf. Lev. 26:6; Ezk 34:25-28), and the imagery of harmonious coexistence in vv.6-9. Moreover, 11:1-5 is particularly concerned with social peace among human beings, brought about by justice to the "anawim", while 11:6-9 is located within the realm of nature in a universal way. Traditio-historical considerations have

²³ G.J. Botterweck (*TDOT* IV, 7) sees the oracle as "visible expression in the restoration of the original order of creation, including harmony between man and beast, and thus security." For G.B. Gray (*Isaiah* [ICC], Edinburgh 1912, 219), it is a real description of a return to the golden age that existed before the flood. Cf. also N. Kiuchi, "b'hēmā" in W.A. VanGemeren, et al. eds., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (NIDOTTE) I, 612.

²⁴ Cf. R. Wakely, "אָר" in NIDOTTE I, 528.

²⁵ Cf. H. Hackmann, *Die Zukunftserwartung des Jesaja*, Göttingen 1893, 142; H. Gross, *Die Idee*, 25; M.J. Mulder, *TWAT* V, 466; also N. Kiuchi, in NIDOTTE I, 613.

²⁶ Cf. Schildenberger "Weissagung und Erfüllung" *Bib* 24 (1943) 107-124; 205-230; J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapter 1-39*, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans 1986, 238; also R.C. Stallman, "אָר" in NIDOTTE I, 513-517, 515; and V.P. Hamilton, "hdh" in NIDOTTE I, 1010.

²⁷ Cf. G. Moracchini, "Le pavement en mosaïque de la basilique paléo-chrétienne et du baptistère de Mariana (Corse)," *CahArch* 13 (1962) 137-160, 139. R. de Vaux, "Une mosaïque byzantine à Ma'in (Transjordanie)," *RevBibl* 47 (1938), 233-234; See V. Buchheit, "Tierfriede," 34.

²⁸ For more details see A.E. Ford, *E. Hicks. Painter of the Peaceable Kingdom*. Philadelphia 1952.

²⁹ Cf. Bible: Éditions Verve 8, 33-34, Paris 1956, Plate 92. V. Buchheit, "Tierfriede," 35 n.125.

³⁰ Seewald's work can be found in several places, including the Parish Hall of Herz-Jesu-Kirche München Abb. ebd. 210, ("Das Paradies").

³¹ Cf. Gen 49:9-10; Num 24:17ff; Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7[8:23b-9:6]; 11:1-5; Mic 5: 2-5 [1-4]; Jer 23:4; Ezk 17:22-23; 34:23-24; Zech 9:9-10; Ps 2; 72; 110; also R.N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981, 119.

³² Cf. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* [OTL], London: SCM Press 1983, 253.

severed 11:6-8 not only from 11:1-5 but also from v.9. This raises the question about the place of this oracle in the agenda of Proto-Isaiah's Messianic oracles (cf. 7:14; 9:1-7; 11:1-5).

In spite of the difficulties, 11:6-9 (*vis-à-vis* 11:1-9) is located in the larger collection in Proto-Isaiah which stretches from 5:1 to 12:6, excluding probably 6:1-8:8 [9:6], the well-known Isaiah's "memoirs" (*Denkschrift*). It is on this and other factors that a good number of scholars have sought to establish links between 11:1-5 and 11:6-9. What is obvious is that the themes of 11:1-5 and 11:6-9 are not incompatible. They reinforce and complement each other both in relation to created order and in scope. The events associated with messianic reign, especially those of removing fear and the danger of evil that militate against justice and peace (v.4), would not be complete unless a global sense of security and safety is brought to bear on harmonious coexistence (vv.8-9). Moreover, the quality of security given to the child playing over the asp's hole or putting its hand on the adder's den (v.8) is no less messianic than that enjoyed by the poor and the meek (v.4).

We can only say that our text has acquired its messianic perspective through its association with 11:1-5. Rather than diminishing the royal theme of 11:1-5, 11:6-9 assigns the emerging ideal ruler a more universal responsibility of bringing new order and of spreading the blessings stemming from it to all creation. In fact, the "rightness" of things in the days of the messianic king is depicted in vv.3-4 as extending to the elimination of every kind of violence among God's creatures, just as peaceful harmony in nature should be understood as being consequent upon the unconditional righteous rule of the new monarchy.³³ Hence the link between justice, peace and harmony.

Thematically, Isa.11: 6-9 is associated with other Proto-Isaiah's messianic oracles, irrespective of lack of consensus in its dating. For instance, our text shares in the commission given by YHWH to the new born royal child (Messiah) to bring endless peace (9:5[6]); it is through him that God remains ever present with and acts among his people (7:14, 11:4), for he is the bearer of God's spirit (11:2), to secure peace for all created beings. In fact, "the messianic hope which began to be expressed in 7:14 and which was amplified in 8:23-9:5 (9:1-6) comes to full flower" in 11:1-16.³⁴ In other words, 11:6-9, in its immediate context, has a messianic perspective. This is why probably Zenger would accept that it be read together with 7:10-17 and 9:1-6 as messianic and Christological.³⁵ Christian liturgy has also always interpreted 11:1-10 in the context of Christ's fulfilling the prophetic prediction of a future and ideal messianic king who would meet people's longing for justice (11:1-5) and peace (11:6-9).³⁶ In this regard the oracle may be seen as a picturesque description of the action of the emerging ideal ruler already expressed in 11:3-5 and, probably, an indictment against the double standard of the former rulership in dealing with the course of the "great" and the "small" in society.

A Close Reading of Isa. 11:6-9

The text of Isa 11:6-9, which forms part of 11:1-9³⁷, is located as earlier indicated within the larger complex of Isa. 5:1-12:6 and at the centre of the section 10:5-12:6 that is said to

³³ Cf. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 253.

³⁴ J.N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 277.

³⁵ Cf. E. Zenger, "Die Verheissung Jesaja 11,1-10 Universal oder Partikular?" in J. van Ruiten, et al., eds., *Studies in the Book of Isaiah 1997*, 137-147, 137.

³⁶ See First Reading of Second Sunday of Advent, Year A; also E. Zenger, "Die Verheissung," 137.

³⁷ Different beginnings have been suggested for this pericope. While K. Koch begins the unit from 10:27b (*The Prophets I The Assyrian Period*, Philadelphia: Fortress 1983, 134), other scholars like J. Jensen prefer to see the tree imagery of 10:33-34 as the beginning (*Isaiah 1-39*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier 1984, 131).

form a brief history of the end-time.³⁸ The chapter directs attention to future salvation after a hint at the theme of judgement in the previous chapter. The entire pericope 11:1-9 is divided into four sub-units: Presentation of the ideal ruler as from the stump of Jesse (v.1), description of the divine endowment by which he will carry out his responsibilities (vv.2-3a),³⁹ description of the manner of his reign (vv.3b-5), and the distinctive mark of this reign (vv.6-9). Our main concern here is the fourth sub-unit, namely the imagery that describes the mark of the reign, which can be summed up in the harmonious relationship between the three groups identified in vv.6-8 and the resultant effect of that relationship in v.9. The groups are:

1) Wild animals – v.6: זאב (wolf), נמר (leopard), נפיר (young lion), v.7: דב (bear), ארדה (lion), and v.8: פתן (asp), צפעוני (adder).

2) Domesticated animals – v.6: כבש (lamb), גדי (kid), עגל (calf), מריא (fatling), and v.7: פרה (cow), בקר (ox).

3) Human agent – v.6: ינעַר [בְּתֵן] ([little] child)⁴⁰, and v.8: יונק (suckling), נמול (weaned child).

The main actions performed in the imagery are those of the animals among themselves. They include גר (to live)⁴¹ רבץ (lie down) in v.6, and רעה (graze)⁴², רבץ (lie down), אכל (eat) [בְּתֵן straw] in v.7. To be remarked is that most of the verbs are used intransitively; they have no adverse effect on a third party, except for the straw that is specifically named the food for the lion and ox (cf. Gen 1:29-30). Another group of actions is that performed by the human agent in relation to the animals. They are: להגיד (lead)⁴³ v.6, and ששעט (Pilpel: to delight oneself [play over])⁴⁴, הרק (stretch out [hand]) of v.8.

The operative word יחד (jointly, all together) stresses the harmonious nature of the relationship between the animals; it describes the mutual eating(?) together of the calf and young lion (v.6) and the lying down together of the offspring⁴⁵ of the cow and the bear (v.7).

Further close reading shows that the wild animals relate with the domesticated animals only in verses 6 and 7, while the human agent has dealings with both the wild and

³⁸ Cf. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 6; also E. Zenger, "Die Verheissung," 143.

³⁹ Verse 2 makes complete meaning without v.3a that could have resulted from dittography of v.2bβ.

⁴⁰ In Isaiah the age of the נעַר varies greatly as in other biblical books. It primarily stands for an unmarried male without independent status, and not head of a family or household (cf. L. Stager, "The Archeology of the Family in the Ancient Israel" BASOR 260(1985), 25). Here, the adjective "little", coupled with the parallel term suckling (יִנְק) in v.8 shows that it can be understood within the age limit of the נעַר in 8:4 in contrast to 7:16; 40:30. An infant or suckling contrasts a grown up (cf. Dt 32:25) and is considered defenceless and helpless (cf. NIDOTTE 2, 427).

⁴¹ This verb implies that its subject is only a temporary resident or even fugitive who lives both at the mercy, hospitality, tolerance and, above all, at the protection of the host (cf. D. Kellermann, *TDOT* II, 439ff). That a lamb could play this host and provide lodging for a wolf irrespective of all suspicions is the beginning of a new order, the key message of the prophet.

⁴² Pasturing is a work proper to YHWH as shepherd (cf. Ps 23:1; Isa 40:11, 44:28). Here it entails giving maximum comfort and care (cf. Songs 1:7,8; 2:16) in contrast to its metaphorically use for selfishness (Ezk 34:2,8).

⁴³ This word has both negative and positive theological implications. It is used negatively in context of judgement (Jer 20:4; cf. Dt 4:27; 28:37) especially of YHWH's action in anger (Lam 3:1,2) and positively to depict liberation (Isa. 63:14; cf. v.11; Ps 78:52; Isa 49:10; Ps 48:15). Besides its usual meaning "to lead, drive, guide" a flock without further qualifications (cf. Ex 3:1; Ps 80:2(1); Job 24:3), the sense in context is that of gentle tending as opposed to driving away the flock (Gen 31:18).

⁴⁴ Occasionally, the delight does not originate from the human person but from God who prompts one to have it (cf. Ps 94:19). It is a characteristic attitude of parents towards their children (Jer 31:20; cf. Isa 66:12). One can then imagine the disposition of this suckling entertaining itself over the hole of the asp.

⁴⁵ The mutual relationship is also expressed by assigning the word יְלִדֵיהֶן (יר with common suffix) to two "incompatible" animals.

domesticated animals in v.6, but with the venomous and poisonous reptiles in v.8. It therefore means that only the human agent has a link with all the animals, wild and domesticated. By this distribution the prophet clearly defines the role of the human agent, the focus and point of emphasis in his imagery, namely peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationship in the realm of creation can be achieved at the guidance and leadership of human agent. However, he adopts a very unconventional way to express this. Rather than opt for the elimination of those animals (cf. Lev 26:6; Isa. 35:9; Ezk 35:9), which his audience would brand as lethal either by being predatory and carnivorous, or poisonous and venomous, he brings them together in his imagery with the tamed, harmless, gentle ones.⁴⁶ This style can only make the hearers/readers stretch their imagination to the optimum. In an economy of words characteristic of the use of imagery, the prophet concentrates on what unites the animals, the fact of their living and sharing resources together; he does not bother about what makes them different,⁴⁷ nor does he characterise them as natural and potential danger/enemy or prey to each other. Above all, he assumes that a cordial relationship exists between the wild and domesticated animals in their own kind respectively (contrast Isa. 5:17 and Jer 50:39).

The presence of the human child in the animal world, where even adults would tremble to venture beats human imagination. Görg admits that "it is a sketch of an almost unbelievable association ... a kind of 'coincidence of opposites!'"⁴⁸ This child designated as little child (v.6), suckling and weaned child (v.8), is enabled to guide/lead the wild animals and relate to both the wild and domesticated animals and remain unharmed. Hence its special function to bring peaceful coexistence to a world to which it now forms a part. As a child-shepherd who is interested in and friendly to God's creatures he can only be conceived in the manner of other Proto-Isaiah's messianic child-deliverers (cf. 7:1-9,10-17; 8:1-4; 9:1-6; 11:1-5). That God rather prefers to adopt continuously the stance of a child to deliver or put order in a chaotic world than a mere show of brutal force and might constitutes one of the central paradoxes in Isaiah's message.⁴⁹ About the mission of this child Oswalt writes: "A child, not a strutting monarch, is the one whom God chooses to rule this world's great. In innocence, simplicity, and faith lie the salvation of a globe grown old in sophistication, cynicism, and violence."⁵⁰ For Görg this ideal ruler "has nothing more in common with the historically experienced shadow side of the monarchy."⁵¹

⁴⁶ The intensity of the imagery can only be appreciated when we recall the natural relationship between some of the wild and domesticated animals in this oracle. For instance, the wolf, an insatiable beast of prey (cf. Gen 49:27; Ezk 22:27), is known for its being fierce and ravenous. It is a destroyer (Jer 5:6) that is to be particularly feared by flock of sheep even when the wolf is dead (Oppian, *Cynegetica*, iii, 282ff) because there exists "implacable hostility between wolf and sheep" (cf. G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* IV, 308). In several other biblical texts the mention of a wolf automatically recalls its hostility with the sheep or flock (cf. Sirach 13:17; Mt 10:16; Lk 10:3; also Acts 20:29 and Jn 10:12). The disparity between the two is clearly accentuated by Jesus in Mt 7:15. The case is not different with the lion. It is known among other things for its attacking a flock (Jer 49:19; 50:44) and tearing it to pieces (Mic 5:8; cf. Ps 17:12) and for attacking human beings (Jer 5:6) and eat them up (1 Kgs 13:24-28; 20:36; 2 Kgs 17:25-26; Isa. 15:9; cf. Dan 6:7-27 [8-28]). It will be striking then to imagine how a wolf can live with such a meek and innocent domestic animal as the lamb (cf. Ex 29:38-41; 2Sam 12:3,4,6; also Gen 21:30) or a lion be led by an inexperienced child or even a nursing child play over the hole of an asp, well-know for its being vengefully deaf in revenge.

⁴⁷ Such differences probably lie behind the injunction that animals of different kinds should be kept separate (cf. Lev 19:19; Dt 22:10).

⁴⁸ M. Görg, *In Abraham's Bosom. Christianity Without the New Testament*, trans. L.M. Maloney; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1999, 111.

⁴⁹ See my article "Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6): A Messianic Title for African Christology" *Journal of Inculcation Theology (JIT)*, 5,1(2003) 3-22, 18f.

⁵⁰ J.N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 283-284.

⁵¹ M. Görg, *In Abraham's Bosom*, 110.

The expression “on all my holy mountain” (בְּכָל־הַר קָדְשִׁי) would seem at the first instance to limit the scope of the oracle to Jerusalem;⁵² but another indicator, precisely “the knowledge of God” suggests otherwise. Two expressions לִים מְבִסִים מַיִם וּמִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ that are associated with דַעַת (knowledge)⁵³ clearly bring out the universal dimension of the oracle. The whole world is full of it and its expanse or limitlessness is only comparable to the waters that cover the sea (11:9b; cf. Hab 2:14).

Knowledge is almost identical with the fear of God (cf. Isa. 11:2) and implies the doing of what is right and just (Jer 22:16). To have knowledge of God is to be in a right relationship with God in love, trust, respect and open communication with the rest of creation. Because the knowledge of God has permeated the universe there was no longer any cause for God’s creatures to hurt or deal wickedly with one another, destroy, or even morally pervert/corrupt⁵⁴ the cosmic order. It is therefore on such a universal background that the pair of negative hiphil imperfect verbs לֹא־יִרְעוּ and לֹא־יִשְׁחָדוּ becomes meaningful.

Strikingly, the harmonious coexistence painted here can be said to reverse the wickedness of a cosmos marked by the corruption of entire created order (Gen 6:11ff; cf. 6:5), and the dread that humans posed for animals (Gen 9:1-3). It also recalls the peaceful coexistence between humans and animals, when no one of them has any cause to kill the other but to depend on plants for food (Gen 1:29-30),⁵⁵ a relationship which was broken because of sin (cf. Gen 3:15; Lev 26:21-22). Apart from some of these rhetoric functions of the imagery, the oracle of Isa. 11:6-9 has a firm theological message, namely that the enemy should be “drawn into the common effort for a just world order” and that the enemy be made “the object of loving attention”⁵⁶ and not of elimination. One can therefore say that there is no justifiable reason to explain the oracle away because of its exquisite imagery as utopian, idealistic and impossible. For the orient as well as the African, every imagery has a message for concrete life and anticipates the response of the individual and society.

Isa. 11:6-9 and Present World Order

Isaiah’s concept of New World order, as we have seen in the foregoing exposition, is based among other elements on – openness, acceptance, respect for individual differences, non-violence, leadership and knowledge of God. These elements so transformed the created order that there existed harmony between the strong and the weak in society. This harmony is created out of living and sharing resources together and extinction of hurt. However, the Bible is also aware of the earth that is not only full of knowledge of God but of violence (Gen 6:13),

⁵² Cf. Isa. 27:13; 66:20; Jer 31:23; Joel 2:1; 4:17(3:17); Zech 8:3; Ps 3:5(4); 43:3; 48:2(1); Dan 9:16,20; also Ex 15:17; Ps 78:54.

⁵³ The use of the derivative דַעַת rather than the common noun יָדַע is significant. Five out of its six occurrences in OT apply to knowledge of God (cf. 1Sam 2:3; Ps 73:11; Isa 28:9; Jer 3:15 and Job 36:4 [of Elihu]). However the usage in this context is peculiar; דַעַת is given a verbal force with a direct object similar to an infinitive (cf. Ex 2:4), hence a verbal substantive. Cf. Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar* (GK) #45a., also *BDB*, 395.

⁵⁴ The hiphil imperfect of שָׁחַד could also have a moral sense.

⁵⁵ The injunction that God gave to human beings to subdue the earth and have dominion over creatures in Gen 1:26-28 is interpreted today in the sense of royal ideology; hence human being, the king of creation, is assigned the shepherding role and the responsibility to take care of the wellbeing of the rest of creation. Cf. C. Westermann, *Genesis. A Practical Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Wm.B. Eerdmans 1987, 11; B. Janowski, *Herrschaft über Tiere Gen 1,26-28 und die Semantik von רָדָה* in G. Braulik, W. Gross, S. McEvenue (eds.), *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel*. FS N. Lohfink, Freiburg 1993, 183-198; E. Zenger, “Die Verheissung,” 145; also 1Kgs 4:24; Ps 110:2; 8:7-9(6-8).

⁵⁶ M. Görg, *In Abraham’s Bosom*, 112.

of guilt (Jer 51:5), etc. This is an intermixture of experiences we have today, which puts a stress on the redemptive work of Christ, the Messiah, probably, because the striving for a New World Order has been left with uncommitted agents, indifferent to peace, justice and knowledge of God. This has left our world with an alternative image different from that which was designed by the creator from the beginning (Gen 1:26-31).

Today our world purports to recapture the lost World Order through "globalisation". This household word of our time is meant to promote harmonious partnership and interdependence in all spheres of life, especially in the socio-economic and technological matters. But the feeling today is that globalisation has become part of the problem and not a path-finder to New World Order.⁵⁷ It contributes in no small measure to widen rather than to close the gap between peoples and nations on one side, and humanity and the environment on the other. The more there are conferences and talks on globalisation in trade, economy and cooperation, the further the reality of a New World Order founded on elements such as those presented in this oracle. This is evidenced in some of the statements arising from international conferences on "building a New World Order" by governmental and non-governmental organisations and other concerned scholars. B. Heurlin in his essay "A New World Order: The Virtual Peace", assessed the present international system and found it "anarchically organised, dominated by polarity."⁵⁸ The anarchy and polarisation are clearly manifest in the socio-political, economic and military spheres.

The imagery of Isa. 11:6-9 is characterised by its spirit of mutual concessions and its spirit of sharing and letting go. Even the ox was prepared to share its straw with the lion; the lion has to accept its dislike (vegetarian food!) just to demonstrate friendship. But today the world trade is highly marked by "economic violence" and very little by reciprocity. Only lip service is paid to economic interdependence. Exploitation is couched in the beautiful jargon "global economic integration" which creates an imbalance between the industrialised countries and the developing ones, thus making the rich richer at the expense of the poor. Apart from injustice of exploitation,⁵⁹ there still exist mistrust and lack of solidarity and commitment to those principles that foster peaceful coexistence.

The creatures in Isa. 11:6-9, the wild and domesticated animals as well as the human child, know no discrimination. Their relationship is marked by mutual acceptance as opposed to the operations of the social-political demagogues of our time. Our world tends towards globalised politics engineered by the super states that stereotype other political, cultural and religious systems. Thus, the weaker states are denied legitimisation; their nationhood is suppressed. The result is a blatant disregard for cultural identity, interests, values, and beliefs of peoples. This creates social-political conflicts and perennially increases insecurity and arms struggle which disrupt world order. Indeed, the observation that in several areas in the world today antagonism rather than cooperation is the norm remains valid. Even within the Church,

⁵⁷ C. Hines in a three-point summary articulated some of the impacts of globalisation on the poor in developing countries (cf. *Localisation: A Global Manifesto*. London and Sterling: Earthscan Publication 2002, 4). J. Arun has followed suit to demonstrate who the beneficiaries of globalisation are, namely "The rich and the powerful, unfettered by national barriers or rules..." Hence, he concludes that "the poor and the marginalised do not benefit from globalisation" and that "globalisation is a force for oppression, exploitation and injustice" and its 'spirit' "unjust and unkind to the weak and the poor." Cf. Taming the Global Demagogue II. A Spirituality for Globalisation", *VJTR* 66(2002), 526-537, 532.

⁵⁸ Cf. B. Hansen, B. Heurlin, eds., *The New World Order. Contrasting Theories*, London: Macmillan Press 2000, 167-196, 170.

⁵⁹ Such unjust exploitation has persisted in acute poverty in developing countries created by the powerful nations through crippling debt burdens irrespective of the age-long calls for the alleviation and cancellation of debts. For a more detailed index on the Church's call on debt alleviation since the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et spes*, 86) see John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 120.

the family of God, it is not impossible to find such disparities and the unwillingness to truly listen to those whose views differ from our own.

Contributing to the discussion on a culture of peace, the Fourth World Conference on Women held September 4-15, 1995 in Beijing, China came up with this assessment among others: "Ours is still an armed and warring planet...." Not much has changed on our planet ever since this assessment was made. The most devastating root cause of disharmony in our time is military polarisation. The world experiences continuously the development and production of more sophisticated advanced weapons systems and more subtle engagement in surveillance and espionage. Unabated, especially in Africa, is conduct of wars, sometimes through proxies in geographical areas outside those of the sponsoring regional or super powers. This is achieved by insinuating anarchy, promoting arms conflict and transactions and, especially, by sponsoring rebel movements.⁶⁰

The assessment of our present world order over a decade ago by the United Church of Canada seems to summarise it all:

We live in a world of violence. There is a growing disparity between rich and poor. There is a power disparity between women and men, between native and non-native, and between marginalised and the privileged. People are treated as expendable commodities. Military spending robs the poor and wastes resources.... Human activity is destroying the global environment. We live in a world of fear.... We fear the violence that maintains the systems of domination and oppression. We experience a world of mistrust, loneliness and lack of community.⁶¹

The question now is: What next? Does the world need to remain in its present picture or even resign to despair? I think the message of the oracle of Isa. 11:6-9 in its context provides a fresh momentum to search for a New World Order. Let us, therefore, examine what constitutes the momentum.

Building a New World Order on Isa. 11:6-9 Model

To appreciate the message of this oracle we need to understand its historical background. Even though this history is marked by lack of clarity, there still remains in the context of Isa. 11:6-9 the fact of an impending Assyrian attack (cf. Isa. 10:27b-34). This attack is prompted by Hezekiah's (Judah's) direct rebellion or his joining in the rebellion against Assyria. Hence the Assyrian attack is seen as reprisal for rebellion. The subsequent YHWH's judgement on Judah is interpreted as outcome of the ineptitude and wrong policies of Judah's leadership. The prophet goes on to contrast Judah's rulership, the enmity and disharmony brought about by its dangerous policies towards its powerful neighbours with an ideal ruler (not necessarily a *David redivivus*) in 11:1-5, whose good leadership ushers in harmony and peaceful

⁶⁰ There is no faulting G. Kim's observation here: "[...] the global arms race, on the one hand, and local conflicts and mini arms races, on the other, has become more distinct and tangible, causing an ever greater instability in international relations and intensifying the negative effect of that instability on the developing countries." Cf. "The Arms Race and Its Consequences for Developing Countries," in J. Fahey, R. Armstrong, eds., *A Peace Reader. Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-violence and World Order*. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press 1987, 147.

⁶¹ Cf. "A Christian Statement of Faith on 'Peace in a Nuclear Age'" (Adopted by the 33rd General Council of August 1990) in A.W. Dorn, ed., *World Order*, 181-182.

coexistence between the one-time enemies (11:6-9). Because wrong internal and external policies, rebellion, attacks and reprisals are directly opposed to harmony and peace in a given society, Isaiah in unequivocal terms gives a picture of an alternative relationship. From the perspective of our text the following observations can be made.

Need for God

Isaiah does not presume in this oracle that restoring a new order in creation will be a chance event. For him it is possible because the knowledge of God pervades the entire universe (Isa. 11:9). And if the role of the little child in this oracle is to be seen in the light of other Isaian messianic children, one can say that God is taking the initiative to lead and guide the created order to peace. It will therefore be preposterous to attempt to build a New World Order without God; for peacemaking is primarily a divine action (cf. Lev. 26:6; Num 6:26; Jer 14:13). YHWH is the originator of peace *par excellence* (Ps 46:10-11(9-10); 85, esp. v.9(8); cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 9:1-6). He creates peace just as other things (Isa. 34:15[14]). He summons human beings to participate in peacemaking mission: "Seek peace and pursue it" (Ps 34:15[14]). According to rabbinic tradition, God was even willing to stretch the truth in order to increase peace between human beings.⁶² He would also overlook even the greatest sin of idolatry in so far as peace reigns among his people.⁶³

That peace originates from the deity is buttressed by evidence from other ancient cultures. The Babylonian god Marduk is addressed in prayer as "Originator of peace among the great gods." From Ugaritic epic (*ANET*, 136) a petition made to El reads:

*Take war (away) from the earth,
banish (all) strife from the soil;
pour peace into earth's very bowels,
much amity into earth's very bowels.*

Basically, the traditional African does not pray for end to wars, which is actually a negative approach to prayer for harmonious coexistence, rather he asks for *shalom*, a total wellbeing, harmony, peacefulness, justice and prosperity, for the individual and community.

*May the whole town have health;
May it have to eat,
May it have to drink;
May the whole town have health.*⁶⁴

An Igbo petition to the deity and the ancestors at the early Morning Prayer goes thus:

*[...] We are asking for life!
Life of man, life of woman!
The life we are asking for is not the life of a cassava tree.*

⁶² Cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 65b; also M.I. Lockshin, "Pursuing Opportunities", 189.

⁶³ According to Rabbi Judah in relation to Hos 4:17, "Great is peace, for even if Israel should worship idols, if there is peace among them, said the Holy One, blessed be he, it is as if I shall not exercise dominion over them [and punish them]" (*Beresheit Rabba* 38:6A). In 38:6B: Israel will be made to bear the guilt "if they are torn by dissention." Cf. J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabba The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis. A New American Translation II*, Atlanta: Scholar Press 1985, 49.

⁶⁴ An ejaculatory prayer from the Nupe of Nigeria cited in S.F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion*, London, 1954, 76; also in A. Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman 1973, Repr. 1978, 108.

*Chineke, you who gave the coconut the milk which it drinks,
Give us life and the wherewithal to sustain it.*⁶⁵

There is no doubt here that it has always been the desire of humanity to live in a state of harmony fashioned by God himself.

Need for Good Leadership

The activities of the little *child*, human agent, in the restoration of harmonious coexistence in Isaiah's "new world" cannot be ignored. Its leading the animals in a way that fosters good relationship, its identifying with and bridging the gap between one-time enemies (11:6,8) points to the outcome of humane leadership. The Old Testament has always conceived peace as the responsibility and achievement of earthly rulers in so far as they are YHWH's vicegerent (cf. 1Sam 8:20; 9:16; 2Sam 7:1,11). Apart from biblical messianic rulers, Hammurabi has remained a model of earthly rulers who achieved such peace with their inventive policies. According to the Epilogue to his Code (*ANET*, 178), this was only possible because he chose to rule by making good laws that were sanctioned by his God and refused to use brutal force.⁶⁶ This again shows that it is when human beings stand in a particular relation with the divine and with one another that peace ensues as God's gift, mediated through his chosen agent (ruler).

Need for Concerted Effort

Pursing peaceful coexistence, breaking walls of disparities, building New World Order is a task for all; it is a task that may often entail swimming against the current or even flouting lower laws. Moses, the great leader of God's people, apparently flouted a specific divine injunction (cf. Dt 2:24-27; also Num 21:21-22) in pursuit of peace, another higher divine command (Ps 34:15[14]). The imagery of 11:6-9 shows a concerted effort on the part of all the creatures and their firm resolve to go against the current. There is a willingness to undergo "metamorphosis", not necessarily in their essence but in their mode of behaviour. The one-time enemies appreciate the strength and weakness of each other and refuse to use the individual differences to enhance self-interest. The wild animals and the poisonous serpents have to give up what constitute them a danger to other groups. The ravenous animals abandoned their natural habitat even for awhile to become guests to their one-time prey. The domesticated animals renounce their inherent fear and suspicion of their natural enemies and play host to them, sharing with them their board and lodging. The human agent ignores all instinct for self-preservation from the wild animals and venomous reptiles; he totally ignores his superiority over "irrational" animals in order to relate with them. The issue is more than mere toleration; it demands a strong will to cohabit with and relate to the other irrespective of individual differences and background.

To build a New World Order those who possess power or/and are regarded as superior should no longer be identified with what they hitherto employed best – force – to achieve their objectives. They must be ready to change their present underlying principle for New

⁶⁵ Cf. E. Ikenga Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretation*, Ibadan: Claverianum Press 1985, 130-131.

⁶⁶ An Assyrian prophetic text (*ANET*, 451f.) summarises how much prosperity and harmony depend on the calibre of the rulership. Philo also believes no mortal can end the present war-like conflicts among nations except "the one uncreated God, when he selects some persons as worthy to be saviours of their race; men who are peaceful, indeed, in disposition, fond of unanimity and fellowship with others, with whom envy has either absolutely never had any connection at all, or else has speedily departed from them...." Cf. *De Praemiis* 31 *Poenis*, 87.

World Order, which seems to derive from the Platonian ideology that vicious animals should rather be removed than be changed. From all indications, tenacious pursuance of the agenda of elimination of the enemy has never been a panacea for world conflicts and, therefore, can never be the mainstay for the New World Order. That the preparedness of the powerful nations to give up their self-interest to accommodate the weak and the powerless would consequently imply the formation of a new united entity in the international system is rightly observed by Heurlin.⁶⁷ The oracle of Isa. 11:6-9 distinguishes itself from several other OT passages by following the path of harmony achieved by deterritorialisation, acceptance, openness and integration (cf. Lev 11:42; Dt 32:24) and not by elimination of the enemy or extermination of the opponent.⁶⁸

Building a New World Order therefore will be realised only when we start recognising pluralism and respecting diversity of peoples and nations; when the strong and powerful start appreciating the weak, cooperating with them, stop being vulnerable to them, stop stampeding and coercing them, stop exploiting them, etc. This is again why the present approach to globalisation may be a false route to a New World Order.

Conclusion

The target group for the message of Isa. 11:6-9 is all embracing; it comprises the strong and the weak, the oppressor and the oppressed, the indigenous and the alien, indeed, the entire creation. Isa. 11:6-9 acknowledges and accepts the reality of a world replete of opposites; it also acknowledges that disharmony and enmity are not YHWH's plan for the world. The oracle reminds every creature of its responsibilities towards the other and the need to curb individual excesses, which may hamper harmonious coexistence, in order to re-establish God's initial plan for the universe.

There is no contesting that the full realisation of a harmonious relationship such as the one painted in this oracle (cf. 65:25) can only be in eschatology. However, the process does not begin and end there. Rather, it begins here and now and end there because it is already initiated by the Christ event. Jesus Christ came as one who would "guide our feet in the way of peace" (Lk 1:79). He established this peace at the cost of his blood (Eph 2:13-22) and gave it to his disciples as a parting gift (Jn 20:19-22). In his teaching, Jesus declared peacemakers "children of God" (Mt 5:9) and commanded his followers "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:43-45) as a way to peace and harmonious life together. We see this injunction as a corroboration of the message of Isa. 11:6-9. This is why the view of Judaism, which sees "a messiah who claims to redeem humanity but does not bring peace to the world as a basic contradiction in terms" must be taken seriously by Christians in particular and the entire humanity in general.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Cf. B. Heurlin, "A New World Order", 170.

⁶⁸ One would think that the traditional African society, which primarily operates on the principle of *Live and let live*, a principle on which the imagery of Isa. 11:6-9 is based, would stand a better chance of experiencing such harmony. In spite of the adage "Let a visitor not maltreat his host nor should the host injure his guest"; "Let the right hand wash the left and the left wash the right so that both will be clean"; "Let both kite and eagle perch," the African still opts for the elimination of the enemy as means to permanent peace. For it is believed that war is not an end in itself but a means through which to force the enemy (pending on the human losses) to negotiate for truce and peace.

⁶⁹ Cf. M.I. Lockshin, "Pursuing Opportunities," 192-193. This same idea was succinctly expressed by Rabbi M. Nahmanides in the Barcelona Disputation of 1263 when he stated that a world without peace is by definition, an unredeemed world (cf. *ibid.* 193). However, our view is different; that evil and crime still exist does not negate the fact of God's initial assessment of all that he made as very good. Surely, God is not to blame if something went wrong and creation was no longer found "very good".

Nevertheless, it does not change the position of Christianity that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, has truly redeemed the world; that he has brought and given the world peace.⁷⁰ If the world has no peace, it is not because the redeemer has not come but that people have refused to allow “the knowledge of God,” the source of peace to permeate their lives and to embrace all that it takes to foster harmonious coexistence. Hence the message of this oracle is an ideal to be pursued rather than be discarded, or deferred to the future or the end-time. For I strongly believe that, although the harmony envisaged here may be seen as a hoped-for reality, it could also be regarded as something situated in a concrete human existence (cf. Ps 72). For peaceful coexistence in the created order points ultimately to that final peace with the creator and all creatures at end-time.

⁷⁰ This is clearly expressed by Justin the Martyr in his *Apology* (1,14) addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius when he claims: “Formerly we hated and killed one another and because of a difference in nationality and custom we refused to admit strangers within our gates. Now since the coming of Christ we all live in peace.” Cf. also E.O. Nwaoru, “Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6),” 3-22.