CHAPTER IV

THE 'WORLD' IN THE NT

God, world and world; though these three concepts are central to metaphysics both Indian and Western, the emphasis on each of these triads has been different. Chiefly due to mayavāda, considered in the general way, including the pre-Sāṅkara trends in Buddhist idealism and in the Ajātivāda, the question of the world got great importance among the Indian philosophers arrayed for or against this theory of the world. In the Western philosophy the 'world' has not been such an object of philosophical speculations and controversies until the time of Descartes and Kant chiefly due to Greek 'extroversion' and Biblical realism.

It is often said that the Indian religious philosophical thinking is world-denying whereas its counterpart in the Semitic religions, including Christianity, is world-affirming. Though there is some truth in this view, it can be accepted only after many qualifications, distinctions, and making room for numerous exceptions as in the case of any such wholesale impressionistic generalisations. We have already pointed out that the world in the BG is anything but unreal. In this chapter, it is hoped to give an objective view of the world in the NT taking into account the different aspects, so that we may be able to see how real the world is according to this sacred book.

We shall proceed first by trying to understand the concept 'world' from the point of view of the Biblical languages Hebrew and Greek. Once having got a descriptive 'definition' of this concept according to the
Biblical language we shall see the texts which seem to speak very positively and then those texts which speak negatively of the world. A casual enquiry will be made into the texts which seem to affirm the world and worldly values and those which seem to deny these. Finally an enquiry will be made as to how this apparent antinomy is solved. As in the case of other NT concepts here too we have to understand the concept in the background of the OT.

A: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Biblical dictionaries point out that "The Hebrew OT has no word for the universe. It normally speaks of 'heaven and earth' or occasionally the 'all' (Ps. 8:6; Is 44:24; Eccl 3:1)." In the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth", this phrase occurs to indicate more or less what we mean by the 'universe', 'world', etc. The Hebrew term 'tebel' stands for the terrestrial world, excluding the sky etc. as in Jr 51:15. In the later books of Greek origin of the OT like Wisdom (cfr. 11:17) and 2 Maccabees (cfr. 7:9, 23) the Greek word 'kosmos' is used to translate the phrase 'heaven and earth', to indicate what we mean by 'world'.

In the NT, to signify what is meant by the phrase 'heaven and earth', as in the Greek OT books, kosmos is used. Kosmos comes from the verb kosmoo which means to arrange, to put order etc. The Greeks fascinated by the order and rhythm in the universe called the world Kosmos. According to Kittel, in the NT 'kosmos' is used not in the Greek sense indicating order, though as an exception we could find in 1Pet 3:3 the use of this word to signify adornment to women more or less in the original Greek
About the meaning and use of this term in different books of the NT Kittle remarks: "In all other passages kosmos means 'world' in some sense. The references are very unevenly distributed. Over half are found in Johannine writings, 78 times in John, 22 in 1 Jn, 1 in 2 Jn and 3 in Rev. Paul comes next with 46 instances. The others are far behind, with 15 in the Synoptics (including parallels) 5 each in Mt, Mk, and 2 Pet, 2 in 1 Pet and 1 in AA".

An expression interchangeable with kosmos in the NT is ta panta ('the all'). This reminds us of the Gita expression sarvam idam tadam (8:22) to signify the brahman. When Paul says "The Father from whom ta panta (this all, everything) come" (1 Cor 8:6) he means kosmos.

Kittel gives the following texts where ta panta is considered as interchangeable with kosmos: 1 Cor 8:6; 15:27 ff. Phil 3:21; Col 1:16; 1:20; Eph 1:10; Heb 1:2; 2:8, 10; 1 Pet 4:7. In AA 17:24 when Paul says that "Since God made the world (ton kosmon) and everything in it (panta ta en auton) is himself the Lord of heaven and earth (ouranou kai geos)" we have a clear example of communicating in a Greek milieu by a Hebrew the Christian message. Here the OT 'heaven and earth' and the Greek kosmos and ta panta are used more or less as synonyms.

Albert Auer in Bauer gives the various shades of meanings the concept 'kosmos' has in the NT. This author rightly points out that the NT does not enter into philosophical speculations on the cosmological or cosmogonic aspects of the world. It accepts the OT cosmology with certain Hellenistic colourings. "The kosmos as the universe is
viewed as a system of spheres. As in the OT, it is divided into ye (earth) and ouranos (heaven). The tripartite division of the OT is also found; the sea or the underworld is here the third sphere.9 The expressions 'elemental principles of the world' (stoikheia tou kosmou) in Gal 4:3; Col 2:8, 26, and that the expression 'out of the world' (ektou kosmou) and in the world' (en to(i) kosmo(i) (Jn 15:19; 17:11) have been used, according to Bauer under the Greek influence.

Though it is difficult to establish precisely whether the term kosmos means the arena in which human life is or the human race as whole which enlivens it, this distinction is present and discernible in a number of cases. Bauer considers Jn 3:16, 17; 8:12, 23; Jn 8:36; 2 Cor 5:19 as fairly clear samples for the use of the kosmos in the sense of arena of human action, vaguely distinguished from humanity.10 The 'world' in the phrases "sin of the world" (Jn 1:29) "saviour of the world" (Jn 4:42) or the statements "the world know him not" (Jn 1:10) and "all the world has gone after him" (Jn 12:19) are given as samples for the use of this concept in the sense of human race or humanity.11

McKemie rightly points out that "in the NT kosmos is both a cosmological and a theological term; it is far more common in theological sense, but the two uses sometimes merge".12 In our study, this distinction has to be seriously taken into account. As will be pointed out, the world-negating attitude in the NT is not in terms of ontological considerations as in terms of value.

B: THE WORLD AS CREATED BY GOD

The NT takes for granted this OT affirmation. Jesus would address
his father as "Lord of heaven and earth" (Mt 11:25) as a commonly accepted doctrine that God is the "Lord" of the universe indicating his total causality in personalistic terms. Paul would say as a matter of course that "All that exists (ta panta) comes from him; all is by him and for him" (Rom 11:36). And according to the author of the Hebrews, the world (ta panta) exists through and for God (2:10). It is in a matter of fact way Jesus says that God "causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike" (Mt. 5:45).

His description of the divine providence in the Sermon on the Mount as described in Mt 6:25-34 and Lk 12:22-31 is based on this common Israelite assumption of the world's total dependence on God in its origin and in its governing. A few verses could be quoted for sample:

Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them...

Can any of you, for all his worrying add one single cubit to his span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith? (Mt. 6:26-30).

This NT attitude is very much dependent on the OT belief in the total dependence of the world on God. A comparative study of the Cosmogonies of Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt as described in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics with that of the cosmogony in the first two chapters of the Bible, we can see that the reactionary attitude of the Biblical author to emphasize that everything in the kosmos including sun,
soon, and the stars, which were worshipped in some of these cultures as divine beings, were created by God. XLD rightly points out:

Between God and the world there is an abyss expressed by the word create (Gen 1:1). If Genesis and other corroboration texts (Ps 8; 104; Pr 8:22-31; Jb 38ff) evoke a creative activity of God, this is solely in order to underline certain points of faith; the distinction between the world and the one God; the dependence of the world in relation to a sovereign God who 'speaks and thinks are (Ps 33:6-9), who governs the laws of nature (Gen 8:22), and through His providence integrates the universe into the plan of salvation which has man at its center.

Looking at the overall attitude in the Bible with regard to the dependence of the world on God, our consideration would look somewhat pedantic. For this doctrine is too obvious for elaboration. However, for a correct understanding of the NT attitudes towards the world and worldly involvement and also to understand the various implications of incarnation highlighting of this assumed doctrine is important.

C: THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TO THE WORLD

"God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:10; 12; 16; 21; 25) this repeated affirmation about the goodness of the world after the description of the creation of different items of the cosmos in the very first chapter of the Bible is bound to surprise anyone. It looks as though the writer is reacting against some other views which seem to consider the world as a mixture of good and evil at its very beginning. And indeed it is so. As has been hinted at earlier, this narration which must have been written after the Babylonian exile, was written by one who must
have been well aware of the Babylonian and Persian cosmogonies where some sort of dualism of good and evil in the creative principle is present. The author of Genesis wants to insist that the world that was created by God was really good, and that if we experience evil in the world, its responsibility is solely in man's rebellion against God, the Creator, as described in chapter three onwards of this book.

There are a number of statements in the other books of the OT too which speak positively of the world in spite of the awareness of those authors of the entrance of Sin in the world. In Psalm 8 we read:

I look up at your heavens, made by your fingers,
at the moon and stars you set in place —
ab, what is man that you should spare a thought for him
the son of man that you should care for him?
yet you have made him little less than a god,
you have crowned him with glory and splendour
made him lord over the work of your hands
set all things under his feet,
beep and oxen, all these,
yes, wild animals too,
birds in the air, fish in the sea
travelling the paths of the ocean
Yahuwah, our Lord,
how great your name through the earth ! (3-9).

The description of creation in Psalm 104 is more vivid and no less positive than in the above stanzas. In the Book of Wisdom the following passage argues as to how to ascend to the knowledge of the Creator from his creation as from the effect to the cause:
"Yes, naturally stupid are all men who have not known God and who, from the good things that are seen have not been able to discover Him-who-is, or by studying the works, have failed to recognize the Artificer. Fire however, or wind, or the swift air, the sphere of the stars, impetuous water, heaven's lamps, are what they have held to be the gods who govern the world. If charmed by their beauty, they have taken things for gods, let them know how the Lord of these excels them since the very Author of beauty has created them.(13:1-3).

The NT too does not ignore the positive aspects of the world. Paul in his speech to the Greeks in Lycaonia points out this aspect:

in the past he allowed each nation to go its own way; but even then he did not leave you without evidence of himself in the good things he does for you: he sends you rain from heaven, he makes your crops grow when they should, he gives you food and makes you happy.(AA 14:16-17).

Paul's speech in Athens too strikes a similar positive note(AA 17:23-31). In his letter to the Romans he uses a similar argument as in Wisdom to ascend from the creatures to the Creator:

For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity-however invisible - have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made (1:19-20).

We have already referred to the teachings of Jesus about God's providence in very positive terms. Besides, according to Jesus, the world is an object of God's love in spite of man's sin. Jesus says: "God loved the world (ton kosmon) so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have
eternal life" (Jn 5:10). According to John (1:10) and Paul (Eph 1:4), the creation took place through Christ, as the eternal Word of God, as though God saw the kosmos reflected in Christ as in a mirror. In other words, even if sin had entered the world, it was never left alone without the saving influence of Christ. In spite of sin, according to Jesus, the heaven is God's throne and the earth his footstool (Mt 5:34-35).

D: THE NEGATIVE VIEW OF THE WORLD

1. In General

In the NT especially in the writings of John and Paul there runs a theme right through that the world is opposed to God, and the standards and norms of the world are just the opposite of God's standards and laws. These statements have to be understood not so much in ontological terms as in value-terms or theological terms. McKenzie brings out our idea clearly when he says:

"The world in a theological sense is the world as the scene of the process of salvation; it is not merely the scene but one of the protagonists of the drama, for the world is mankind as fallen, as alienated from God and hostile to God and to Jesus Christ. This conception is most frequent in the Pauline writings and in Jn, less frequent in Synoptic Gospels."

In more generalistic terms, Kittle points out the peculiarity of the NT concept of the world especially in Jn and Paul. He says: "In these two writers, however, there develops out of the use of kosmos the new concept of the world which is peculiar to the NT. The kosmos is now understood as the theatre of salvation history, as the locus of revelation..."
in Christ, and in consequence it appears in a wholly new light."\textsuperscript{16}

For Paul, God's standard is opposed to that of the world (1 Cor. 1:26) though Paul here uses the word sarx (flesh) to express the negative aspect of the world. According to him "the wisdom, strength and nobility of the world are the folly, weakness and ignobility of God (1 Cor 1:20-23; 3:18-19). There is the spirit of the world and the spirit of God (1 Cor 2:12). "To suffer in God's way means changing to the better and leaves no regrets, but to suffer as the world knows, suffering brings death" (2 Cor 7:10). Hence St. Paul exhorts: "Do not model yourself on the behaviour of the world around you" (Rom 12:2).

Paul seems to speak of anti-divine powers involved in the world, making use of the myths existing in the Hebrew-Hellenistic world. He says: "For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the sovereignties and powers who originate the darkness of this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens ( Eph 6:12). JBC gives the following interpretation to the use of names like 'Sovereignities of rulers of the world': "The expression 'rulers of the world' aptly describes the function that people of the time considered them to have; spirits were thought to have a decisive control over human events... It gives people a sense of futility in their efforts to face a controlled world whose governing powers are beyond them".\textsuperscript{17}

According to Johannine writings the world does not know Christ (Jn 1:10) or God (Jn 17:25). Christ came into the world to give light (Jn 8:12; 9:5) and life (6:33, 51) and thus to take away the sinful power from the world (Jn 1:29; 1 Jn 2:2). Jesus says: "The world cannot hate
you, but it does hate me, because I give evidence that its ways are evil" (Jn 7:7; cfr Jn 15:18). Christ is not of the world (Jn 3:23; 17:14) nor is his kingdom (Jn 18:36). As Christ is hated by the world so also his followers will be hated (Jn 15:18; 17:14; 1 Jn 3:13).

About the peculiar Johannine concept of the world Kittel says:

When John says of the kosmos that it does not know the Son of God, that it does not know God, that it does not believe, that it hates, the kosmos is in some sense personified as the great opponent of the Redeemer in salvation history. It is as it were a powerful collective person which the archon tou kosmou (princes of the world) represents.

This negative view of the world can be traced back to Genesis 3 where the first sin is described. Adam's sin brought about curse to the world both in the sense of an arena of human activity and in the sense of human race. Yahweh's curse of Adam reaches down to the material world: "Accursed be the soil because of you. With suffering shall you get food from it every day of your life. It shall yield you brambles and thistles, and you shall eat wild plants" (3:17, 18). After the rebellion against God the first couple, Adam and Eve, begin to get alienated from each other (3:12). And the fourth chapter of Genesis narrates the story of the rivalry between the first two human brothers until Abel the younger brother is killed by Cain the elder. Sin thus multiplies and the 'world' becomes more and more hostile to God. We have seen the picturesque way St. Paul explains the entrance of Sin into the world as a Personified power. It is belief in the presence of sin in the world and the consequent anti-divine attitude of the world...
as a whole is the root of this anti-worldly attitude in the NT. Rightly therefore McKenzie remarks: "The base of the opposition is found in the sinfulness of the world, the sin which entered the world through one man (Rom 5:12). Because of sin the world lies under God's judgement" (Rom 5:6-19; 1 Co 6:2; 11:32). In similar vein Bauer writes: "Sin constitutes the basis for the opposition between God and the world: 'the whole world may be held accountable to God (Rom 3:19) as sinful. This is also the reason why Jn 3:17 and 1 Cor 6:2 speak of 'condemning-judging the world'. The condemnation of the world in 1 Cor 11:32 is similarly motivated." And this 'sin' is understood also by St John as evil tendencies which reminds us of the three gates of hell described in the BG (16:21). John says: "The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world, because nothing the world has to offer - the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possessions - could ever come from the Father but only from the world."(1 Jn 2:15, 16).

2. The Negative Attitude towards the World

The anti-worldly attitude found in the NT is nothing but a corollary of this concept of the world. Various grades of attitudes are suggested in the NT towards the world from downright opposition to an attitude of indifference or detachment. Above we have seen just how St. John equates the love of the world with hatred of God (1 Jn 2:15). In this, St. James is no less explicit. He says:"You are as adulterous wives; don't you realise that making the world your friend is making God your enemy? Anyone who chooses the world for his friend turns himself into God's enemy"(Jas 4:4). This reminds us of Jesus's statement
in the Sermon on the Mount that we cannot serve two masters, namely God and at the same time, riches, one of the constitutive elements of the anti-divine world (Mt 6:24). In St. James' language it would be an adultery to love 'money' instead of God to whom man owes his total submission and devotion. St. Paul would say that the world is crucified to him and he to the world showing the incompatibility of following Christ together with the world (Gal. 6:14).

Jesus said to his disciples: "In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). Elsewhere Jesus says that the prince of this world, that is the evil power in the world, personified as Satan, will be overthrown by him (Jn 12:31). As Christ was opposed by the world so too the followers of Christ will be (Jn 15:18; cfr 1 Jn 3:13; Mt 10:14; 2 Pet 2:19). Indeed, a follower of Christ is called upon to enter into a warfare with the world and its evil powers (Eph 6:10-13), and with total commitment to Christ, Christ's followers can conquer the world as Christ did (1 Jn 5:4-5). Indeed, through the power of the Spirit the followers of Christ will triumph over the Satanic power of the world opposed to Christ (1 Jn 4:4 ff).

Christ prays to his Heavenly Father not to separate his followers from the world but only to protect them from its evil power (Jn 17:15). A disciple of Christ has to be in the world (Jn 15:1; 17:11; 1 Jn 4:17) but is not supposed to be of the world (Jn 15:19; 17:14, 16) in the sense that he does not belong to the world, submitting himself to the standards of the world. Jesus said: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For
anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:24-25). The inner renunciation implies warfare with the ego which wants to choose material, transitory things instead of God. The ego or the inauthentic self in man wants to choose what is pleasing (prasya) rather than what is totally fulfilling (ahreya) since to choose what is ahreya implies taking up the cross, that is to say, to choose the path of suffering, or to choose the 'narrow path' (Mt 7:13-14).

Other attitudes suggested in the NT towards the world are complete detachment and neutrality or indifference. St. Paul says that "Those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it" (1 Cor 7:31). Both Peter (1 Pet 2:11) and Paul (2 Cor 5:6) counsel to live the world as exiles or wayfarers without any attachment to the world. For man's true home is in 'heaven' after his liberation (1 Pet 1:17; 2 Cor 5:1-5; Heb 11:15-16). For, these disciples had assimilated the meaning of Jesus' teachings in the matter of the transitoriness of the world, and of being prepared to leave the world for the 'eternal home' in heaven. He said: "What again, then is it for a man to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined his very self?" (Lk 9:25). With various parables Jesus instructed his disciples about the danger of absolutizing the earthly values (Lk 12:15-21; 16:13-31; 16:18-30). The earthly preoccupations can make man unprepared and unfit to be united with God in eternal bliss after one's death (Lk 14:15-24; 17:22-37).

All these parables and statements emphatically teach that this world is transitory and that life beyond this world is the true life, and that for that life man must be well prepared.
The theological concept of the world in the NT, just treated above, will be onesided and incomplete independently of *The Kingdom of God*.

This expression is found mostly in the Synoptics though the idea signified in it is seen right through the NT. Whereas Mark and Luke call 'Kingdom of God', Matthew prefers 'the kingdom of Heaven', in keeping with the Jewish tradition of substituting, out of reverence, the name of God with other names. The theme of 'Kingdom of God' is one of the central ones in the NT. And so hardly any justice can be done to it by a few remarks in a small section of a chapter. Since this theme is bound up with those of incarnation it will be touched upon when the question is dealt with. However, to avoid the one-sided picture of the world and worldly involvement, some remarks on this theme has to be made here by way of stressing the importance of this theme as complementary to that of the anti-divine world.

'The Kingdom of God' is the translation of *basileia tou theou* of the original Greek text of the NT. In most instances in the NA, it means *reign of God* rather than *kingdom* in the geographical sense.

*Basileia* is very much a translation of *malkut* of the Hebrew OT. In the OT, Yahweh alone is the true king. According to the Psalms (103:19; 145:11-13) the kingdom of Yahweh is universal and everlasting, and of glory and power. The kingdom of David was called the kingdom of Yahweh (1 Chr 28:5). The good news par excellence which is announced in Jerusalem is: 'Your God reigns' (Is 52:7; cf Zp 3:14 f).

And one glimpses there a progressive extension of this rule to the
entire earth: from everywhere men will come to Jerusalem to adore the King of Yahweh (Ze 14:9; Is 24:23)." In Daniel the kingdom of God is said to belong to a mysterious person called the Son of Man coming in the clouds (7:14, 18, 22), and in Da 4:3, the everlasting kingdom of Yahweh is mentioned. These few texts are sufficient to show that the NT concept of basileia tou theou has its precedence in the OT though the NT adds new meaning to it by associating or even identifying it with Jesus Christ.

True, from a historical point of view, the kingdom of God was inaugurated by Jesus Christ two millennia ago. He began his public life with the proclamation that the kingdom of God was near or had already arrived (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28; Mk 1:15; 11:10; Lk 10:9, 11:11:20; 17:20).

But a warning has to be made in identifying the arrival of God’s kingdom with that of the historical Christ. For, it is also a NT doctrine that there was not a time in history when God’s kingdom was not present in the world fighting against the anti-divine kosmos. Here it would suffice to say provisionally that through the historical Christ this kingdom of God, which was already existing, got its historical tangibility and definiteness.

The basileia is described in the NT as something present, as something in the process of growth and expansion, and as a future reality at the end of the world. When Jesus was asked about the time of the kingdom of God, he said: "...the kingdom of God is among you" (Lk 17:20).

Jesus asks his disciples to seek for the kingdom and its justice (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31), and to pray for its arrival (Mt 6:10; Lk 11:2). In the context
of healing a demoniac and referring to his power over the demons be said: "But if it is through the Spirit of God that I cast devils out, then know that the kingdom of God has overtaken you" (Mt 12:28). The kingdom is considered as in the process of growth when it is compared to a seed which is gradually growing (Mt 4:26-28). It starts like a small mustard seed which grows into a big tree (Mt 15:31). Its gradual growth and influence over the world are compared to the transforming influence of leaven over the dough (Mt 15:33). But the majority of references in the NT seem to be with regard to the kingdom which will be realized or accomplished at the end of time. The kingdom to which the good thief asks admission from Jesus is to this future one (Lk 23:42).

To enter this kingdom, known as the eschatological kingdom, is synonymous with entrance into eternal life (Lk 9:47; 2 Pet 1:11). It is in this eschatological kingdom the twelve disciples of Christ will sit on twelve thrones (Mt 19:28; Lk 12:22).

The kingdom preached about by Jesus is not of this world. When the enthusiastic crowd, after the multiplication of the loaves by Jesus, wanted to make him the king he hid himself from them though he claimed himself to be founding a new kingdom (Jn 6:15). And before Pilate he firmly affirms his kingship while at the same time saying that his kingdom is not of this world (Jn 1:36-37). To be admitted to this kingdom one has to be childlike (Mt 18:3; Mk 10:15; Lk 18:17) righteous more than the scribes and the Pharisees (Mt 5:20), eager to do the will of God (Mt 7:21), and detached from worldly possessions (Mt 19:23; Mk 10:23; Lk 18:24). XLD briefly describes the nature of the citizens of this kingdom giving
various MT references:

Poverty of soul (Mt 5:3), a childlike attitude (Mt 18:1-4; 19:14), an active search for the kingdom and its justice (Mt 6:33) bearing persecution (Mt 5:10; Mt 14:22; 2 Th 1:5), the sacrifice of all one possesses (Mt 19:23), perfection greater than that of the pharisees (Mt 5:26); in a word, the accomplishment of the Father's will (Mt 7:21), especially in the matter of fraternal charity (Mt 25:34); all this is asked of him who wishes to enter the kingdom and finally inherit it. For if all are called to it, not all will be chosen; the guest without the wedding garment will be cast out (Mt 22:11-14).

This kingdom is for all, including those people considered the lowest in the eyes of the Jews, like the tax collectors and prostitutes (Mt 2:15). Of course it goes far beyond the limits of the Jewish nation. Jesus says: "And I tell you that many will come from east and west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 8:11). Here we do not enter into the intimate connection or even identification of the kingdom with the person of Christ since it has to be understood in the context of our discussion on incarnation. However, in order not to lose sight of the central issue of this concept the following remarks by XLD could be cited provisionally:

On the other hand he does not hesitate to identify the cause of the kingdom with his own: to leave all for God's kingdom (Lk 18:29) is to leave all 'for His name' (Mt 19:29; cf Mk 10:29). Describing in advance the eschatological reward which awaits men, he identified the 'kingdom of the Son of man (Jesus himself) and the kingdom of the Father' (Mt 13:41 f.), and he assures his apostles that He will give them the kingdom as His Father has given it to him (Lk 22:29 f.).
The involvement in the world of the followers of Christ has to be understood in terms of the Kingdom of God or of Christ. If Christ expects from his followers total detachment from the 'kosmos' he expects wholehearted commitment to the world under the aspects of God's kingdom with new standards and norms of human life and activities. Christ came to inaugurate the kingdom of God. Jesus chooses twelve disciples "to be companions and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:14). And in his lifetime he sent these disciples to preach the message of the kingdom as he did. "He called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Lk 9:1-2; cf Mt 10:1-16). And his final message to his followers before his ascension to heaven was to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). In Mark, in the final instruction of Christ to his disciples it includes the preaching of the message of the kingdom to all "creations". "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16:15). Christ gives authority over this kingdom ('kings of the kingdom') to the chief of his disciples Peter (Mt. 16:19) to organize the work for the kingdom in his name, a kingdom where the ruler will be the servant, the first the last (Mk 10:41-45), the law will be one of brotherly love (Jn 13:34-35) a love which concentrates chiefly on the most needy and the oppressed like the hungry, thirsty, naked etc (Mt 25:31-46). Soon after the ascension of Christ and the Pentecostal enlightenment of the disciples, the disciples wholeheartedly committed themselves to the work of the spread of the kingdom of God, at the risk of torture and death. One might say that the whole book of the Acts of the Apostles in the NT is a long narrative of the wholehearted
dedication of the followers of Christ to continue Christ's work for the kingdom of God. In short, the involvement of the followers of Christ in the world has to be by fully accepting God's total dominion over the world following his laws, which can be summarised into one law, namely the law of love (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:15; cf also 1 Cor 13). So the statement that the NT is world-affirming has to be understood with reference to the kingdom of God in the process of conquering the anti-divine world.

F: CONCLUSION:

Our brief study of the concept of the world in the NT has shown that it takes hardly any interest in the cosmological aspect of the world, nor does it propound any cosmogonic theories as the ancient Iranian, Mesopotamian or Egyptian religions do. Its fundamental assumption, depending very much on the OT assertion, that the world has been created by God without depending on any other reality. Indeed, the word of Yahweh which is the basis of the whole cosmos, a key concept which has been overlooked by us for later consideration in the context of the concept of incarnation. In the NT God or the "Heavenly Father" is truly the absolute "Lord of Heaven and earth" on whom the cosmos totally depends for its origin and for its continued existence in being.

True, in the NT there is very little interest in the world as a geographical reality, but it is not so as a sociological reality. For the NT, the world is not only a stage for human drama, but also it includes the actors themselves, the whole of humanity of the past, present and future. Indeed, the geographical dimension is considered as an exten-
sion of the sociological or historical dimension. But again, these two dimensions do not exhaust the meanings of the kosmos according to the NT. There is another dimension which might be called the axioo
tic or value dimension which could be partly expressed in terms of the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious, the repository of the anti-divine and divine forces in the world. This aspect which the Christian thinkers call the theological aspect, is of primary concern in our sacred book though keeping intimate connection with the other two.

There is hardly any optimistic statement about the world in the NT as is found in the first chapter of the Bible - "God saw that it was good". The world is opposed to God and man. It has been contaminated by sin. And sin affects it totally including its material aspect an important topic which has been left untouched for treatment in some detail later on. Making use of the myths current in the Hebrew-Helleni
stic milieu the NT speaks of various preterhuman, intelligent forces which are working to disintegrate the world into a greater chaos, lea

ding it away from God. Due to the activities of these anti-divine personified forces, and due to the cancer of personal and collective sins, the world has become opposed to God, Christ and man, thereby tending towards disintegration.

The NT picture of the world especially of its axiooetic dimension, cannot be understood independently of the concept of the Kingdom of God, which is the God-centred aspect of the world. It is light in darkness, dynamism of life and integration in the midst of corrupting and disinte-
grating forces, and love-energy in the midst of violence and hatred.

True, by far the emphasis in the NT is that it is Jesus who inaugurated the kingdom, and that it is in the process of growth since his time until there will be a new heaven and new earth (Apoc 21:1-2). But there is equally strong emphasis that since the world was created in Christ this kingdom was operative right from the beginning of creation, and so there was no time when the anti-divine forces alone reigned in the world.

The attitude suggested for the followers of Christ is to oppose the kosmos and to support the basileia. That is to say, a follower of Christ has to be fully involved in the world, and is responsible for the growth of God's kingdom within oneself, among men and in the totality of the cosmos. Therefore, the world-affirming attitude of the NT is not in terms of the world opposed to God, Christ, and man (kosmos) but in terms of the world where God through Christ reigns (basileia) and is expanding his reign both extensively and intensively like the leaven in the dough.

The world, in the ontological sense, is very real in the NT; but its reality is totally dependent on God, the creator. From an axiomatic point of view the world has both eternal and transitory, divine and anti-divine polarities. These could be put in terms of the real and the unreal, of sat and asat. The NT affirms that Christ has conquered the anti-divine forces, and that anyone who follows the path charted out by Christ will also conquer these forces. True, there are wars and dissensions, but the forces that bring together humanity in the field of politics, economics, science and religion are still far more powerful than the other forces. There is much hatred and revengefulness in the world; but the
moments that unite a husband and a wife, children and parents, neighbours and neighbours, nations and actions are far more real than the other, though we take these for granted.

According to the NT the world is the product of one God without depending on any other thing except his very creative word, and the will of God does reign supreme in guiding the history of the world towards a definite goal. To be sure, the NT accepts the OT faith that the world was very good when it was created. But the existence and activities' of the mysterious anti-divine forces too are accepted in the NT without trying to speculate on their origin and nature. A passage from Augustine's *City of God* which graphically expresses this bipolar aspect of the world would be an appropriate ending to this chapter on the NT concept of the world:

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves; the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men, but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Though art my glory, and the lifter of my head (Ps 3:4). In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying while the former take thought of all.