REDEMPTION

The following notes about redemption, from a multi-disciplinary viewpoint, have been occasioned by a request from Fr.Juventius Andrade, C.SS.R., (General Council, Rome), who is seeking to provide a theological and spiritual background for Redemptorists in their reflection on the mystery of Redemption.

Much of this material comes from previous work done over many years, in teaching graduate courses on Redemption especially at Fordham University in New York City, and post-graduate seminars on Redemption at Australian Catholic University, Sydney.

The approach taken here is predominantly pastoral, in the sense of communicating to good news to believing Christians. There are two reasons for this pastoral option.

First, a vision of redemption has emerged from scriptural studies, over the past fifty years or so, that is very rich. It has not been seen – or even heard of - yet by most people. We need to lead people into this vision, step by step.

Secondly, an understanding of redemption is present in most people, that is the result of historical and cultural factors that go back a long way, and that is now recognised to be psychologically damaging and spiritually limiting. In fact, most people at heart find it hard to believe it, while it worries them a lot in their religious attitudes. We need to take people away from this approach, as soon as possible.

What does redemption mean? It means to be included, through the person and life of Jesus, in God's life and love, as a matter of justice – a matter of God's kind of justice, which is the same as God's way of binding God's self to be infinitely bountiful to us. In this way God has not only delivered us from the evils that worry us, God has acquired us for God's own Self. Redemption is much more copious than pardon for sin.

Most people do not realise how free from worry God wants them to be, and how much they are redeemed and acquired by God.

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February 2005

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1. THE PROBLEM OF 'REDEMPTION'

I have often been asked to provide a theological presentation on the theme of 'redemption', as a background and support for a spirituality of 'redemption'. The task is not as easy as it sounds. Spiritual people seem to presuppose that there is a readily available theology of redemption which supports their unquestioned spirituality. In fact, the contemporary theology of redemption is much more complex; it does not offer much support for the going spiritualities of redemption - it is rather a critique of them; and yet it does promise a new and appealing vision of a 'redeeming' God. We have to work between two very different worldviews : that of an established 'theory of redemption' , and that of a critical research and a re-discovery of 'redemption'.

Theological concepts have a history. They are conceived in a culture, and born(e) into another and often yet another one. By the time they get to us, they are often in their old age. We don't see clearly where they came from, or what they tried to say. When we find out, it is often a surprise. I would like to offer something of that kind of surprise, by looking at the concept of *redemption*, and at the related concepts of *atonement, expiation, satisfaction ,reconciliaton, etc.* Recently, the International Theological Commission spoke of the 'perceived inadequacy' of our current theologies of redemption, and of their 'openness to serious and dangerous misunderstanding'.

There are serious questions today about the theology of redemption.[1]

I would like to begin with a quotation from W. Norris Clarke, S.J., emeritus professor of philosophy at Fordham University, New York.[2]

> Misinterpretation and misunderstanding are very easy here, and Catholic theologians themselves have not always helped. Some metaphors of Scripture, too, have lent themselves to easy misunderstanding. Such metaphors like 'ransom', which occur here and there, are used to explain why Jesus died for our sins - as though a price had to be paid to someone, either to the devil or to God himself, to win our forgiveness; or as if some kind of bargain had to be made with God, who exacted the price of his Son's death and whose anger was appeased by seeing his Son suffer and die. St.Anselm in the twelfth century even worked out a whole theological theory of the redemption built on a kind of justice transaction between God and the human race, where Jesus fulfilled the debt that man could not pay, since an offense against the infinite dignity of God could only be repaid by someone of equally infinite dignity, like Jesus as divine-human.
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> I take such expressions as metaphors in the Scripture, which are never in fact spelled out literally as a debt or ransom paid to anyone. The theological explanations, like Anselm's which tried to build on a literal interpretation of such metaphors were well-intentioned indeed, and had a certain legal, logical appeal. But they gave the impression of a not very loving and compassionate God, rather of one insisting on justice, on the "pound of flesh", so to speak, and satisfied by seeing his own Son suffer. There was a point of truth in them, but it seemed to get buried in the justice perspective. *Few, I believe, would hold such theories today.* (p.56) (his italics)

This is an extremely succinct statement, whose ultimate value may be in its questioning of the kind of God that is assumed behind the standard model of 'satisfaction' theory and 'redemption' theology, and in the kind of human being that God is interested in. But that comment anticipates most of this reflection.

Jean-Herve Nicolas, O.P., emeritus professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and leading representative of the Thomist school, has testified to the same questioning. [3] He speaks of the 'recoil of

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[1] For general introductory reading, I recommend G.Daly, Creation and Redemption, Glazier, 1989; C.Gunton, The Actuality of the Atonement - a study of metaphor, rationality, and the christian tradition, Edinburgh (T. and T.Clark), 1989; P.S.Fiddes, Past Event and Present Salvation, the christian idea of the atonement, London (Darton, Longman and Todd), 1989; there is an entire issue of Chicago Studies, 22 (1983) n.1, The Need for Salvation; an overview is given by N.Smart, Soteriology, Encyclopedia of Religion, 13 (1987) 418-422;

[2] A Course in Miracles, and Christianity : A Dialogue, Kenneth Wapnick and W.Norris Clarke, Foundation for 'A Course in Miracles', Roscoe, N.Y., 1995.

[3] Le Christ est mort pour nos peches selon les Ecritures, Revue Thomiste, 96

many today when faced with the very idea that the liberation of sinful men, their salvation, has been achieved by the passion and death of Christ'.

He mentions in particular the recent work of Joseph Moignt, S.J., emeritus professor of theology at Lyons-Fourviere and Paris-Sevres. [4] It is true that Moignt writes :

> that Jesus has 'died for our sins according to the scriptures' is a statement of apostolic teaching (1 Cor 15,3) which is imposed unconditionally on faith and which confers on his death an indubitably salutary significance. (p.414)

But, as Nicolas points out, Moignt 'then contests the sacrificial and expiatory character of this death : neither the texts alleged present his death as expiatory, nor above all has Jesus himself given to his death the meaning of a sacrifice offered to his Father for that purpose' (p.395-454).

The International Theological Commission has included the following statement in its lengthy 'resume' of thinking about redemption [5]:

> ...some attention should be paid to what one might call the internal Christian debate on redemption, and especially to the question of how the suffering and death of Christ is related to the winning of the world's redemption. The importance of this question is heightened today in many quarters because of the perceived inadequacy - or at least perceived openness to serious and dangerous misunderstanding - of certain traditional ways of understanding Christ's work of redemption in terms of compensation or punishment for our sins...

In my opinion, many good people who have invested in various spiritualities of redemption are not aware of these critiques, and would be, initially, at least surprised by them. This paper is an attempt to introduce them into a wider look at the question.

At a parish mission recently, the congregation sang the hymn "How Great Thou Art". Verse 3 goes like this:

> "And when I think that God, his son not sparing,
> sent him to die, I scarce can take it in –
> That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
> He bled and died to take away my sins."

This reflects a widespread mentality about redemption. It is found in many other popular hymns and prayers. Serious theology of redemption at present criticises it severely.

Many people still make acts of contrition, learned in childhood, that contain three statements: they have committed an infinite offence against God; they expect dreadful punishments as a result; they believe that each individual sin of the ordinary person down the street has been responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. In contemporary theology of redemption, all these statements are untrue. There is no theological foundation for any one of them. All three are at best a huge exaggeration, and at worst do harm to people.

There is a quotation from Will Campbell**,** an American Baptist preacher. He says: "We're all bastards, but God loves us anyway." That notion, that we are not really transformed and transfigured by the love of God, but are

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(1996) 209-234.

[4] L'Homme qui venait de Dieu, Paris (Editions du Cerf), 1993.

[5] Select Questions on the Theology of God the Redeemer, International Theological Commission, 1995 - available in English in Communio, 1997, 160-214 - herein cited as ITC with page references from the Communio translation; a more recent document from the same International Theological Commission ought also be consulted - Le Christianisme et les religions, 1996, available in French in Documentation Catholique, 1997, 312-332 (the original is in Spanish). These ITC documents - on their own statement - do not propose to offer new theological elements, but merely a sure point of reference for a continuing discussion and investigation of the questions.

only tolerated, because we are still bastards, is part of the mentality that present redemption theology is criticising.[6]

This whole mentality could be called 'atonement' spirituality. It is very hard to shift this, because it is not a head trip concept. It is an ingrained psychologically deep thing. [7] It is almost archetypal. A theology of redemption must still question it.

The basic elements of this atonement mentality would be three metaphors. It is important to realise that they are indeed metaphors. Atonement mentality almost conaturally treats the metaphors, as if you were talking literal reality.

The metaphors are:

1. the metaphor of aggression;
2. the metaphor of distantiation;
3. the metaphor of repentance.

1. Aggression means that whenever we allegedly sin, we injure God, which is an act of aggression, or we insult God or offend God, which is an alternative word.
   It is physically or ontologically impossible for us to do that to God. But the idea is used as a metaphor in this whole atonement tradition and is treated as if it was equivalent to straight reality.

2. The distantiation metaphor is that, in this theory, when you have aggressively injured God, God distantiates from you, and God becomes a distant God, who is up on his high horse and is extremely touchy and doesn't want to have anything to do with you, and that means that you have to do something to bring God back in touch with you.

3. The third metaphor is repentance.. The core of the word is "*pent*" – that you are going to "*pent*" again, which is clearly comes from the Greek word "*penthos*" which is "feeling". The trouble with re-orienting your feelings is that you don't really want to do it. You get caught in a double bind of enjoying what you did when you allegedly sinned, and not enjoying what you are about to do when you propose to repent. So, what you think you ought to do, and what you are feeling, don't really sit in any congruence in either situation. Repentance becomes an extremely ambiguous sort of experience, whose ambivalence is sometimes not identified.

   The Hebrew roots of the idea, (shuv), show that a certain 'return' to God is involved. To 'return' means that you are separate from God, and want to end the separation. But, as we said above, the notion of 'distantiation' from God, and by God, is a metaphor. It is often used as if it is much more than a metaphor, and the difference is not clarified. [8]

There is ambivalence in the coexistence in one person of the emotional attitudes of love and hate, or other opposite feelings, towards the same object or situation. In the atonement mentality, people often so hate themselves that they are prepared to punish themselves in all sorts of ways. They are also prepared to suffer for

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[6] Martin Luther: "Christ says to me, "You are no longer a sinner, but I am. I am your substitute. You have not sinned, but I have.... All your sins are to rest on Me and not on you." He bears our sin, death, and hell, our misery of soul and body." (Sermons on John's Gospel).

[7] Luther is a huge exponent of this, but it is not exclusively Lutheran. It has infiltrated very powerfully into the Catholic tradition, and sometimes I think that today the Catholics have it more than the Lutherans.

[8] I have also come to realize that there is a certain political factor in all of this. Many people in the church have largely traded on the ambiguity of the atonement mentality for political purposes in order to keep people quiet. Now if you tell people that they've sinned and they need to atone for their sins, but cannot really do so, management has a certain political advantage over them.

someone else to get them out of that situation, or let someone else suffer for them for the same purpose. This is the root of the 'atonement mentality'.

This whole notion of repentance seems to have its origins in a psychology of shame, rather than of guilt. You are ashamed, you are embarrassed, and the word compunction is often added to it – which literally means "punching holes in a balloon –letting the air out of it, deflating it" literally. People who get into this mood feel deflated or put down, which is translated as a loss of self or a death of self. It is fascinating how the imagery gets more and more absolute, and loss becomes death very rapidly, and you annihilate self, and that is called 'conversion' – not a healthy concept, when seen in this light.

You get it in terms of Augustine's Two Cities – the city of this world and the city of God. We live in the city of this world, but are meant to live in the ideal city of God. The whole thing comes back to a mystery of obedience to a set-up that you don't like, and making amends means feeling the pain of that transition.

Words that go around it are:

atonement,
expiation,
propitiation or making up to God,
vicarious satisfaction or doing it for someone else, when they can't do it,
condign satisfaction - "condign" being a more theological term meaning "absolutely adequate",
sacrifice.

When Jesus is seen in terms of these notions, it is said that he identifies with us, and does it for us, and that is called a redemptive incarnation.

If you ever want to feel the emotional vibes in a crowd, along these atonement lines, just go to the 3.0 o'clock liturgy on Good Friday afternoon. No matter what the liturgical committee of the parish has done, or how well the celebrant is performing, the people will almost archetypically bring this notion with them.

It is useful to look again at the theology of 'satisfaction', or 'redemption', that lies behind this atonement mentality. Nicolas' article is an attempt at a critical review of some of the more significant historical theologies of redemption, and at a balanced case for the retention of one of them. I believe it represents as good an updated case for an intelligent version of 'satisfaction theory' and 'redemption theology' as can be made. If we follow his argument, we learn much about the present state of the question, and erect a launching pad for further developments, and for a serious critique. I use it for this discussion, since the formation in systematic theology of many, if not most of the intended readership is in the kind of Thomist theology that Nicolas expounds. I must say at the outset, that though I was myself formed in this theology and appreciate its inner coherence, I have been forced by biblical data, and pastoral considerations, to criticise it severely, (as I shall do later). I find the entire reflection on redemption today a classic example of how scriptural data must exercise a liberating, critical and constructive function in regard to centuries-old theological persuasions which are not well founded in scripture. But first, let us hear it, somewhat amply, on its own terms.[9]

His position is - in a much more developed presentation - equivalent to that described by Clarke when the latter writes :

> According to christianity, Jesus really died on the cross to atone for human sins, to teach us both the depth of evil in serious sin and the even greater depth of divine love as willing to forgive us and restore us to an even higher union with God. He rose from the dead in a real but glorified body to carry out effectively this restoration of us to an even closer union with God than we had before our sins. (p.84)

[9] Nicolas' work on this area of theology in his Synthese dogmatique, de la Trinite a la Trinite, Fribourg-Suisse, Editions Universitaires Fribourg-Suisse, 1986, especially pp.498-524, is an earlier and more ample version of his constant position. One could also use M.J.Nicolas, OP, Pour une theologie integrale de la redemption, Revue Thomiste, 1981, 34-78; and, from a less thomistic and more patristic perspective, J.P.Jossua, O.P., Le Salut : incarnation ou mystere pascal ? chez les peres de l'Eglise de Saint Irenee a Saint Leon le Grand, Paris (Cerf), 1967.

Nicolas commences with the position of the scriptures : Christ died for our sins (I Cor 15,3), and gave his life for us (I Jn 3,16). He takes it as incontestable that Christ has freed man from the slavery of sin. He notes that the preferred language to speak of this in the new testament, and especially in St.Paul, is 'redemption'. He takes 'redemption' to mean - in one way or another - 'ransom' - that is, the paying of a price to someone.

He then reviews three unacceptable interpretations of this image or metaphor : first, the 'rights of the devil' - illustrious names from the Fathers of the Church can be found here, but they always had their opponents - the position cannot be called 'traditional' in the true sense; secondly, the 'rights of God' - St.Anselm is the origin of this, and it has been widespread since -Anselm has dominated almost a millenium of theology in these matters[10]; and thirdly, 'penal substitution' - this idea can be found sporadically in the ancient tradition, but was articulated strongly by the sixteenth century Reformers, and then in some Catholic circles, especially in France (e.g. Bossuet).[11]

The first theory is built on the cultural image of the liberation of a slave through the payment of a price. Man, by sin, that is, by disobeying God, has become the slave of the devil, the first sinner in his own primordial disobedience. The devil then acquired rights over man. So a divine pardon would have gone against the rights of the devil. Only Jesus Christ, who did not belong to the devil, could give his life as a payment to the devil, which would then enable the Father to pardon man, and which would free those enslaved by the devil.

There are unsustainable ideas here (this phrase is that of Nicolas himself): namely, that the devil has rights greater than those of God, and that the Son is more merciful than the Father! [This criticism is exactly that of Nicolas himself.]

The second theory accepts the image of paying a price to another, and gives the 'money' to God. It is important to note the roots of this theory in the previous one. Wrong has been done to God by sin. Something has been stolen from God. It is God's honour. This rests in God's claim to sovereignty. As a result, there is a change in God, and God is angry: aggression has occurred against God. So God's anger must be appeased, and God's honoured 'satisfied'. God cannot, while keeping his honour, dispense from these requirements, and just pardon us. This is the real reason for the Incarnation (Cur Deus Homo): God became man, so that Christ could make vicarious satisfaction for us. Only Christ could do it : first, because all we have is from God anyway, by virtue of creation, and secondly, because it would take an infinite person to offer a gift of infinite worth to God, to make up for an offence of infinite malice.

There are unsustainable ideas here: the theory does not rise above anthropomorphism, and metaphor, and says that God is really damaged, and really angry, and is limited in his ability to respond in mercy. [Again, the critique is that made by Nicolas.]

The third theory interprets the anger, seen in God in the second theory, as worked out in a will to punish an innocent substitute for the guilty party. This is seen as making the anger disappear.

This is totally unsustainable: it is a brutal and blind vengeance, that has nothing to do with even human justice, where it is unjust to punish someone for another's offence. It is unworthy, not only of God, but of humans as well. [As Nicolas says well.]

Nicolas then correctly shows that St.Thomas himself has reverently criticised such theories, especially that of Anselm, (without alluding to him by name) as being locked in to too human a view of God, and too human a version of justice. (Cf. 3a, q.46,a.2,ad 3um).

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[10] ITC (p.187 : no.16) : 'Anselm begins with the idea of God as sovereign Lord,whose honour is offended by sin. The order of commutative justice demands adequate reparation, which can only be given by the God-man. "The debt was so great that while none but man must solve the debt, none but God was able to do it; so that he who does it must be both God and man".'

[11] ITC (p.190 : no.23) says : 'In some versions of Protestant, and even Catholic, pulpit oratory, the penal substitution theory depicted God almost as a vengeful sovereign exacting reparation for his offended honour..'

Nicolas then undertakes to give an outline of a 'satisfaction theory' that he thinks will not be subject to such critiques. In effect, he is at pains to make the best and most purified case for a 'satisfaction theory'. He says that despite its weaknesses, to his mind no other viable solution has been proposed in exchange for it. He explains what he means by sin, reparation, and vicarious satisfaction, and applies his categories to Christ, and to us.

Sin is really an intentional rupture of the relationship with God that is implied in the creative act itself. The total ontological dependency of the creature upon the Creator, implies a full intentional recognition of the loving God as the absolute source of all being and the absolute Sovereign of the whole finite cosmos. Creation in its full meaning is a mystery of love, especially of God's love and self-gift to the created person, which demands a return of that love in reciprocal self-giving. Sin is the counter-acting of that set of relationships, in the refusal of this Infinite Good and the refusal to be loved in this personal way by God. It is clear that it is a relational matter : God is in no way 'physically', or ontologically, touched by sin.

> Norris Clarke puts it very clearly :
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> God is offended by our sins, not because his own dignity is in any way threatened or wounded - which is impossible for any creature to do - but only because our sins hurt us, and God does not want his beloved children to be hurt. (p.57)

(Clarke's emphasis)

He adds :

> Traditional Christianity maintains that human beings have really sinned and turned away from God, hence have the burden of a genuine (not neurotic) guilt, needing to be forgiven by God. (p.56)

These thoughts are profound. It is in the inner life and love of God that creation has its source, and sin deprives the creature and God Himself of the - strongly and divinely intended - fruit of that act. As St.Thomas tellingly says, in Ia,q.48,a.6 :

> Malum vero culpae opponitur proprie ipso bono increato : contrariatur enim impletioni divinae voluntatis et divino amore quo bonum divinum in seipso amatur et non solum secundum quod participatur a creatura. [The evil of fault is opposed properly speaking to the uncreated good itself : for it is contrary to the fulfillment of the divine will and to the divine love by which the divine good is loved in itself and not only in so far as it is participated by the creature.]

Nicolas says that the creature does not know what it has lost. It is a case of 'immense damage' to itself, much more than it is really aware of.

Reparation for sin is understood by Nicolas as an act by which the one who has sinned annuls the aggression contained in the sin. He sees the 'contre-amour' of sin as an aggression. Satisfaction is the act by which the sinner annuls that aggression: it must concern God directly, although the sinner is the beneficiary. This act can only be one of 'return' to God. This begins with a 'prise de conscience' clearly, afresh, and in a vivid way, of the depth of evil in the fault. It is accompanied by an intention to love God totally as God deserves to be loved. This return is called repentance, in which someone who is ashamed, and humbled and sorrowfully afflicted in a new awareness of what he has done in offending God, loves God with a love coloured and qualified by this pain, and so wants to re-give himself to God : it is a penitent love. The classic word for it is 'compunction'. It includes the recognition of fault, and the awareness of an inability to efface the ingratitude that - one admits and 'confesses' - has taken place. There is a conflict and a combat within the person, primarily at the spiritual level (on which the sin originally took place): a conflict and a combat between 'the sinner' and 'the penitent', since their desire is in different directions. It is as if these are two different personalities. Repentance is hard personal 'work' as one fights the other. This is the real process of liberation of man from the slavery of sin.

It is a love impregnated with this suffering that generates the desire to repudiate the sin and return to God. In it, there is a hatred of the 'moi-pecheur', which is not a hatred of the real, veritable self. It is concretised and expressed symbolically in renunciation of self-interest (that is, the interest of the 'moi-pecheur') : this is what 'losing your self' or 'losing your life' mean. It is seen as a value in itself (irrespective of what may result from it for the good of others). It demands what is called 'conversion'. Augustine has said it well : two loves have built two cities : the love of God, taken to the point of contempt for self (that is, effacement and subordination of the self), builds the city of God, just as the love of self taken to the point of contempt for God has built what we could call the city of self. St.Thomas,

reflecting on this text, said that the disordinate love of self is the principle of all sin (1a-2ae, q.77,a.4). This mental attitude is expressed most significantly in death : not the taking of one's own life, but the acceptance of death, as a symbol of the acceptance of the 'death' of one's inordinately loved self. This acceptance of death is then also seen as a value in itself, its value lying precisely in its expressiveness of the interior 'death to self-interest'. This is an act of 'obedience' (to the implied 'rules' of creation) that compensates for the 'disobedience' of sin. It is a real deliverance from the slavery of sin.

The 'acceptance of death' mentioned above implies more than that. It implies a certain violence - as we experience it - in the way life is taken from us. This comes from the fact that our life is made humanly irretrievable by us, and so eliminated : it is gone and dead as far as we are concerned. Many spiritualities have asked people not just to accept this, but to offer to God their acceptance of it as a way of inducing or persuading God to forgive their sin and remove their guilt. The assumption is that God, prior to this, was not willing to do so. A whole understanding of 'sacrifice' comes from this. It is basically the substitution of, say, an animal, for the sinner, and a ritual of the violent removal of the animal's life, as a victim, offered to the God to induce the God's favour in regard to the community offering the victim. The 'effect' of the sacrifice would then be called 'atonement', or the 'expiation' of sin. [We shall see later that these destructive interpretations of sacrifice do not correspond to the intuition of the Hebrew scriptures, and are the foil for, not the content of, revelation in the matter.]

It is important to realise that God cannot 'just forgive' sin without more ado: God cannot pardon the sinner without bringing him back to God's love. Forgiveness is a restoration, and more. That is why it is a free gift - a grace - (the crown of creation), and hard work at the same time. It is grace for two reasons, one that it is a good deal beyond our capacities so to go against our self, and the other that is a gratuitous re-introduction to the divine life and love.

> [Certain theologians, in the past and at present, and indeed those of high repute and great and deserved merit, have suggested that no one will finally be damned, that is, that the grace of forgiveness is ultimately given to all. The concrete possibility of the refusal of the grace must be maintained, but... who knows ? In the last analysis, all is grace, and we cannot determine the limits of grace.]

It is the plan of God that the grace of this reparation for human sin come through vicarious satisfaction, that is, through satisfaction done for us by someone else, namely Jesus Christ.[12] God could have given this grace to those who had sinned, individually, and immediately after their sin, but has preferred to send his Son, into our historical world, and give it to all of us through him.

The principle here is that all humanity, that had sinned, is included in him, (and in this way, only in him - vicarious satisfaction of the kind that Christ has made for us, could not have been done by anyone else, nor can we do it now for one another in the way that Christ has done for us.) The head and the members are 'quasi una persona mystica', as Aquinas says (3a,q.48,a.2, ad 1um). This is the fruit of the grace of Union itself, as he explains in his work on Christology in the Tertia. But this demands that Jesus himself, as a person, has experienced a penitent love for God, and has accepted death as its supreme symbol. Christ in no way offended God (indeed, as God, was offended by sin).

But the implication is that Jesus Christ, in his human life, has lived a life of penitent love, and accepted death as the supreme symbol of his 'self-denial' as inclusive of our 'self-denial'. God has not spared him from this (Rm 8,32), and he has laid down his life of himself (Jn 10,18), obedient unto death and that the death of the cross (Ph 2,8), obedient to him who could have saved him from this death but opted not to, for our sake, and so becoming for those who obey him the principle of eternal salvation through such obedience (Hb 5,9). Jesus is then never abandoned or betrayed by God, and God never withdrew God's presence and protection and love from Jesus, but God shared with Jesus his plan, or will, that others would receive the grace of repentant love only through Jesus' lived experience of it. [As God, Christ has himself conceived and willed this plan with the Father and the Holy Spirit.] As man, he has accepted it all, including the passion and crucifixion, as the liberative and redemptive will of God : not as I will, but as you will (Mt 26, 39).

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[12] ITC (p.186 : no.12) : 'Jesus Christ fights his battle as a human being and in this way saves the honour of humanity in his perfect response to God (the 'factio' called for from humankind) and also reveals the majesty of God (the 'satis' from God which completes 'satisfactio').'

The death of Jesus is then to be interpreted not primarily from below, as if it were the work of executioners, or of a Roman prefect, or of Jewish authorities at the time, or even of all sinful men. It is the will of the redeeming God because without it we could not be liberated from the slavery (to self) into which our sins have taken us. We are dealing with a mystery of mercy that includes justice, a mystery called the 'redemptive incarnation'. There is a value intrinsic to the death of Christ on the cross, a value which is primordially mystical. Some conscious intention on the part of Jesus concerning this mystery is postulated in this theory. Avery Dulles, John Galvin and Roger Haight, among contemporary catholic systematic theologians in North America (in Fordham, Washington, and Boston), insist on this.

It is an easy step to conceive Jesus in his work of vicarious satisfaction for our sins as a 'surrogate victim' in a sacrifice offered to God to atone for our guilt. It would also follow that he could be conceived as a priest, offering himself as victim in this 'sacrifice of the cross'. The fact of his death by crucifixion, and the physical dimension of crucifixion would appear as a dramatisation, allowed and intended by divine providence, to bring out vividly to us the reality of the violent removal of his life, 'for our sins', and thus, both the depth of evil in sin, and the depth of mercy in God's forgiveness through Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus is seen, in this theory, as the fullness of God's response to the redemptive work of Jesus. As forgiveness is grace, its gracious character is manifested in the fullness of the new gift that is given : a grace for body as well as for soul. Just as the 'work' of satisfaction was dramatised in the reality of the cross, so the 'grace' of God's response is dramatised in the reality of the empty tomb, which Jesus has merited by the loving work of his redeeming passion.

It is from the images, rather than from the logic, in this entire theory of satisfaction (and 'theology of redemption') that various spiritualities have emerged in the christian tradition.

There have in fact been two principal periods of history in which this has flourished. The first is the fourth century in Rome; the second comes from the spirituality of the French oratory, and was the climax of a French reaction to the Reformation and to the Enlightenment, which saw itself as the flowering of the theology of the Council of Trent.

It is within that second stream that any 'spirituality of redemption' seems to emerge among Redemptorists. Both Hitz and Durrwell were formed in theology by Dillenschneider, whose theology is largely influenced by the French oratory.][13] Both radically qualified the theory in terms of their large biblical understanding.

We need to look at the history of 'redemption'.

2. THE HISTORY OF 'REDEMPTION'

Jean Herve Nicolas has noted that the early history of redemption is governed by a dominant metaphor. It is the metaphor of 'rights'. Redemption was considered in terms of the right of the devil (sic), the rights of God, and of penal substitution. Many interpretations were not acceptable.
We have looked at them in the previous chapter.

The real beginning of the history of the idea of redemption is Augustine. Augustine lays down a platform without explicitly speaking of atonement, but, if he had not put that platform down, later authors would not have done so. The 2nd millennium would not have been what it was. Historians are now saying that we're really talking about is a 2nd millennium problem in theology, roughly starting just prior to the year 1000 and still going quite well, just after the year 2000.

[13] It would be interesting to explore the 'paschal mystery' theology which became popular among Redemptorists after Durrwell and others like Lyonnet had done the hard work on the biblical texts. There are grounds now for thinking that perhaps the model was not entirely of biblical inspiration, and that it could be criticised in favour of other models of 'passover'. But that would be another paper.

Augustine – I think it's not wrong to say – single-handedly shifted the centre of gravity of the whole believing world, from the East to the West. If there's a major difference between Eastern theology and Western theology, it does come from Augustine. And he did that by single-handedly creating the doctrine of Original Sin. I believe that everyone in Scripture these days would say, (I don't know how loudly), that there is no doctrine of Original Sin in Scripture. The doctrine is simply not there. The doctrine is a creation from the mind of Augustine, but it's an extraordinary thing – it's a myth of human origins and of how humans are made up. It's a myth in which the idea of atonement later on can sit very comfortably, almost as a necessary consequence when it's worked out. Without Augustine I don't think we would have had it. [14]

Augustine imagined that in their original history humans were very privileged in an idyllic condition in which there was no pain, and there were no violent instincts and no inordinate emotions that we actually have. He called these instincts and emotions concupiscence. And he said: "Well! I know we are not like that, so how come we were like that once, and we're not like that now. Our condition now is dark, sinful, tragic, bad and all the rest of it. So, there must have been a Fall from that Golden Age and we are suffering the consequences of the Fall, and our whole vocation is eventually to go back to where we were."

In that paradigm, which he sold to the whole Christian West, the only way to live would be to go back to where you were, and the only way to do that would be by atonement for the mess you'd made of things, in the Fall and afterwards. So he really left the door entirely open for the atonement theory.

It is an extraordinary mystery as to why Augustine's pitch on origins and original sin stuck in the West. He said that people generally prefer to feel guilty rather than to feel helpless. If you feel guilty, at least you can blame something for life being like that, rather than blaming nothing. And even if you've got to blame yourself, well, at least you know. And I think that's really why the inoculation of Augustinian guilt took, so to speak. But the interesting thing is that in the Greek, or the Eastern tradition, more broadly than just the Greek one, this never happened, and they never really bought Augustine, and they work on extremely different lines from us.

After Augustine, the whole philosophy of Neo-Platonism and Plotinus and so on developed in the West, but it was mixed with a discovery of the philosopher called Dionysius. He used to be called pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, but now in more truth we are calling him Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite. I think he was genuinely a man called Dionysius, but he was thought to be the character St. Paul met in Athens. Clearly he wasn't. He was a 6th century individual. But he was a great thinker and he thought of the entire cosmos in a way which few people have been able to do, and he put it in layers, in a hierarchy of layer upon layer upon layer. It was an extremely beautiful cosmic model as it were, and, in the East, they largely bought that and still do, whereas in the West they merged Augustine's pessimism with this very beautiful vision of Dionysius. So the atonement mentality was as it were in latency, if you like, from Augustine up to about the turn of the millennium.[15]

But let's stay with the West because it is where I think the action principally is. In the early 11th century, a major development took place that has often not been talked about or reflected upon. A paradigm of human civil law came to the fore and was used as the principal paradigm to interpret relationships with God, so that our connection with God was interpreted according the norms of human civil law. Once you allow that in, you're away. And you only have to put an Augustinian injection into that, and you're into Atonement almost by necessity.

The story is very interesting and it's not all bad. Pope Gregory VII in 1075 initiated a reform that was very much needed – before that, people largely worked out of simple 'pre-legal' arrangements. I would call them tribal folk lore – and you can spell that as "lore" or "law". They are largely kinship arrangements – the relations between local lords and feudal serfs and people like that – and a general basic sense of honour and harmony in fairly simple communities – they didn't have a formalized articulated law. In those early days, the latter part of 1st millennium, the Holy Roman Emperor thought he was the Vicar of Christ and said so, and he

[14] G.Daly, St.Augustine and modern theology, in Augustinian spirituality and the charism of the Augustinians, ed. J.Rotelle, Augustinian Press, 1995.

[15] W.Hankey, Philosophy and the Theological Foundations of Augustinian spirituality, ibid, 32-45.

thought the Pope was his chaplain and that was the eternal arrangement. That's very different from the way we talk now.

When Gregory VII came along, he set up an independent papal court, for the first time in history, to which all the faithful of Europe effectively had a right of appeal. This had not previously existed. He set up really an arbitration or reconciliation commission for all of Europe. And to do that, he had to come up with civil law in a developed form, and he systematized civil law in the Church. Now the emerging little states and nations in Europe were starting to get off the ground at the time, and they simply had to keep up with the Gregories in Rome! They had to come up with their codes of civil law in order to compete with what Gregory had done in the Church, and the result is, that somewhere around the late 11th century, you get the birth of human law everywhere as a governing pattern of living, and it was accepted rapidly, and it became the mindset in which people started to think very comfortably about everything, including about God.[16]

Now this is the real birth of a theory of human relationships with God that has conditioned Christian spirituality for a long time. There was a spontaneous feeling in the people and in the writings of the time that God was bound by this implied code of human law. Hence our spiritual relationship with God amounted to a legal transaction with God, so that people might be forgiven their sin by God. However, there would be legal consequences – their sins were forgiven, as long as there were obligatory punishments for having sinned - as long as they could pay off to God their mortgage on forgiveness, if I could say it that way.[17]

How would they do that? They could go on the Crusades or go on a pilgrimage, or do something that was regarded as extraordinarily difficult. Or, if you couldn't do it in this world, you could do it in a place called Purgatory, the explicit idea of which was largely invented at this time.

We have often said in the past that Purgatory is in the Scriptures, but, I'm not sure that there is <u>any</u> really clear reference to anything like that, and there is only the vaguest reference to after-life along these lines. Personally I think that Purgatory first emerged not far from the present Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris – somewhere in the late 11th century – in the school of Paris explicitly. Clearly it's part of this mentality. God is the great law-giver, and God has to police all the debts, and here you are into that mentality.

Now, with that basis, came Anselm. Normally speaking, if you read a book on atonement in a theology course, you are going to start (and perhaps finish) with Anselm. I don't think that's a good idea.

Anselm is simply a monk, who was articulate enough to put a formal theory of atonement into words, but he would never have been able to do it, without the background we have seen. And what he did, was get hold of the key images that we've already noticed on track, and set them out with a kind of logic between them, that put a synthesis into it all.

Anselm lived from 1033 to1109 – a Piedmontese, he was the Benedictine Abbot of Bec, Archbishop of Canterbury): <u>Why God Became Man</u> (published 1098). The work is written to answer the objections of unbelievers who reject Christian faith as contrary to reason. Unbelievers are Jews. The answers are given in the name of reason. The work is written as a dialogue with Boso.

In 1076 Emperor Henry IV was prostrate in the snow at Canossa before Gregory VII. The Pope was *defending his honour a feudal lord*. The defence of feudal honour is a key motif in these times, between church and state.

Anselm wrote the book in exile, where he was sent by the English king, William Rufus, whose honour he had offended. It was the 'investiture controversy'. The king had claimed the right of making appointments to monastic and ecclesiastical offices. Anselm would not acknowledge the king's temporal authority, or given him

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[16] Harold.J.Berman, <u>Law and Revolution: the Formationof the Western Legal Tradition</u>, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1983.

[17] David Loy, The spiritual origins of the west, <u>International Philosophical Quarterly</u>, June 2000 215-234.

honour, until he renounced this claim. William's successor, King Henry 1, agreed to pay homage to the archbishop. Retribution had happened. A few decades later, King Henry 2 would execute Thomas a Becket for largely the same conflict of authority.

So for Anselm, *God is an aggrieved feudal lord, weighing out compensation to an offending human race, on a finely calibrated scale.* [18]

This is the standard reading of Anselm.[19]

He said each real sin offended, injured, insulted God. You are back on your aggression image. Now, he said, how do you measure the amount of moral offence that you give to someone you offend? You measure it by the dignity of the person offended. For example, if you offend the curate in a parish, it's reasonably bad; if you offend the parish priest, it would be worse; if you offend the auxiliary bishop, well that's getting serious; and if you offend the archbishop, well you can go to Hell!

It's the dignity of the person offended that is the measure of the moral offence.

Now God's dignity has to be infinite. So, if we offend God in an ordinary sin of an ordinary person, we are doing an act of infinite malice. That's an enormous concept – that we can do something of an infinite moral estimation. So, if you want to make reparation or atonement for doing something like that, you have to offer something to the offended person that will, in their eyes, be of the same worth as the offence that you offered.

Now you measure the value of such an offering by the dignity of the person making the offer – you switch it around the other way so that:

If the curate offers you something, you say, "Oh, thank you!"
If the parish priest, you say, "Thank you very much!"
If it's the auxiliary bishop, you say, "Oh, I am most grateful!"
And if you get an offer form headquarters, well you take it!

Now this is where the catch is – it's a catch 22. Because we can all, in this theory, do something of infinite negative estimation to God, but none of us, because we are finite, can offer God anything of infinite positive estimation. So we can't make up for the mess that we're able to do. It's really the catch 22 of humanity, and Anselm was insightful enough to realize it. And this is why he said: "If there is an incarnation, that's why. Why did God become man? Because of that crisis."

God becomes one of us in Jesus, and Jesus Christ is a divine person and everything he does, or each gift, that he offers to God, is of infinite moral value. So Jesus can make an offering to God, that God loves infinitely, and, if he chooses to do it on our behalf, because he is one of us, it will do for us too. That means that you square the books. That means that you have adequate or condign satisfaction for what you've done.

Now it's true that Jesus could have done that, says Anselm, by any act that he chose. Even one prayer would have been enough, but, in God's plan, and Jesus goes along with it, the idea is to dramatize this arrangement and to do it in such a way that it would have a permanent impact upon the human imagination. So Jesus does it by offering his life in his death on the cross, and that is the whole drama of the crucifixion. You've heard all this before, I know, but this is the formalizing of that mentality that we've been picking up behind it.

The trouble with it is that, after that's done, our duty is to thank Jesus for doing it for us, and of course we can never make up to Jesus adequately for what Jesus has done for us. It's like a rabbit trying to catch its tail,

[18] James Carroll, Constantine's Sword : pp 28-ff. Daniel Bell, Jr., Sacrifice and Suffering: beyond justice, human rights, and capitalism, Modern Theology, 2002, July, 333-359. [This article makes use of the work of D.Bentley Hart, A Gift Exceeding Every Debt: an Eastern Orthodox Appreciation of Anselm's Cur Deus Homo, Pro Ecclesia, 1993, 333-349; Hans von Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord, vol. 2, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1984; John Milbank, Forgiveness and Incarnation, in Questioning God, J.Caputo et al, eds., Indiana U P., 2001. It appears that the standard interpretation of Anselm may perhaps not do justice to his historical mind.]

and it never does. And you always feel as though: "Well, you're no good, if you never did enough to make up for your sins, but Jesus did, God bless him." And even if I live a life of penance, and mortification, and take all the rough stuff around, it will never be nearly as much as the crucifixion. And even if I live in conversion and compunction and repentance and all that stuff, it couldn't possibly square the books with Jesus or with God.

So you end up with a very particular form of negative image, called a "spared victim". You should have been the one crucified, but Jesus did it for you. Thank you Jesus. You got off the hook, and it's a spared victim that can never say "thank you" adequately to the Saviour.

And that's Good Friday afternoon in a lot of people's minds, and that's why they turn up for the liturgy then. No matter what you preach about, that's what they do…and that's what they feel – and it's classical atonement mentality.

Actually, as far as I can see, and subject to further work, Thomas Aquinas inherited Anselm, and he thought that what Anselm was saying was the revealed doctrine of the Church, and so he never questioned it. [He did downgrade it from central position in his thought, in some of his commentaries on Scripture, especially his Lectura in Ioannem.]

But I think today we can question it, because I think we can see where the sources came from. Anselm couldn't have existed without Gregory's push for human law, as your pattern for dealing with God, and without Augustine's pessimism about who we are and what we're all about anyhow.

A word about Peter Abelard. He was one of the few in Paris who didn't go along with that track of thought and he judged it was a little too heavy, so he tried to find a different sort of theory of his own, but it never caught on. You find one or two theologians at the moment who say: "Let's revive Abelard." But I really don't think it will happen before the resurrection of the dead. *Peter Abelard* preferred to speak of Christ as teaching by way of example. God could have satisfied his honour without the cross of Christ, but wanted sinners to recognise themselves as objects of the crucified love of Jesus and thereby be converted. The passion of Christ is a revelation of Christ's love, an example that stirs to imitation.

There is a fascinating development from that point onwards in the later Middle Ages, one that is extremely pertinent even to us today. This development is not theoretical, or theological. It is practical, in the devotional life of the people at large.

1. the *eschata* – or the last things;
2. devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary;
3. devotion to the physical sufferings of Jesus in the Passion.

In the 13th century itself, there is a famous hymn called the *Dies Irae.* It is still used sometimes in Masses for the Dead. One of its verses starts off with: *Rex tremendae maiestatis* – King of terrifying majesty. This is the image of God coming through, and this was accepted and taken as normal, or it would never have got into such a hymn.

In the world of literature and art, there is Dante's Inferno and the whole tradition of painting that starts with Dante and goes through with Giotto and Michelangelo and so on – Last Judgment themes.

In music, there is the music of the Masses for the Dead. In all this, there is a return to that old legal system of relations between the human and the divine, and it becomes devotionally normative now. What particularly emerges is that there is a living out of judicial cruelty. In this medieval period, judicial cruelty was accepted as normal. They were able to go out and execute people and even do worse to them before the execution, and this was regarded as fair and above board, and not only that, but spectators were invited. This was really the pre-history of Rugby League!

But once you dip into culture like that, you start seeing God as doing all of this judicial cruelty to everybody, and you get the liturgical music, and you get sacred art work, and you get the religious imagination portraying that sort of God. There is a tremendous fear of what happens when you die, because you couldn't possibly atone for your sins and so you could be on the wrong end of the divine judicial cruelty.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary emerged at this stage as largely compensation for the heaviness of that eschatological approach – compensation to balance what I would call the male chauvinism of the brutality. It is very interesting that you get Madonnas in the art world, and you get hymns to the Blessed Virgin Mary, - all the lovely side of the faith-tradition. Much of this is still around.

There was a revival of myths of mother goddesses, especially from Egypt, and you get troubadours going around the European towns and villages, with their lyrics and hymns and music. That was really the devotional life of the people – compensation for being unable to atone adequately to God.

You have to have it focussed on the Passion of Jesus.[20] Well, I suppose "Passion of Christ" is not entirely the right word – it's actually the focus on the physical sufferings of Jesus in the Passion. (This is certainly what Mel Gibson revived in The Passion of the Christ film in 2004). I don't know if you've noticed but, if you read the Gospel accounts of the Passion, there's hardly any reference to any physical suffering of Jesus. It's just not mentioned. It's not there. "*They took him out and crucified him*", and that's it. But there's no description of how he felt, and suffered physically. That comes largely from 12th century Cistercians , following St. Bernard, and 13th century Franciscans, and you get into a whole Renaissance art, and you get the *Pieta* and crucifixes, that haven't been painted or sculptured quite like that before. And it's all a pictorial reminder that at least he copped it adequately for us – and that's the deal!

If you put the three elements together – the *eschata*; the Blessed Virgin Mary; and the physical sufferings of Jesus' Passion – I think you get the present day piety of most Catholic people.

- the Judgment of God at death;
- the Christmas, Infancy stories;
- the Good Friday, crucifix, Easter material.

Somewhere in this period, there is a transition from Christ as warlord and judge to Christ as weeping sufferer with physical and emotional vulnerability. There is a transition from Mary the Stoic Virgin Queen to Mary the co-sufferer. There is a major development of empathy: the crucified and his mother have the one flesh (Jesus has only one parent); the empathy is subsumed into divine love. There is a foundation for the theology of co-redemptrix, but not in its 17th century version. This whole development has come from monks, especially Anselm. [21]

Jean Delumeau has put together a historically very accurate compendium of countless examples of preaching and catechesis especially during 13th-18th centuries in France, Spain, Germany, England and Belgium. [22] You could well be appalled by the picture that emerges. It is a picture of pessimism, inducement of guilt in simple people, the focus on death as a punishment by God, the completely negative view of the human body and especially of sexuality, the negative view of marriage, as always inferior to celibacy and virginity, and the assumption that children were conceived and born in Original Sin, which made them bad right from the beginning.

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[20] Ian Guthridge, The rise and decline of the christian empire, Medici School publications, 1999.
Cf. Rachel Fulton, From Judgment to Passion: devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200, Columbia UP 2002. Cf. Celia Chazelle, The cruficied God in the Carolingian Era, theology and art of Christ's passion, Cambridge UP 2001. Ariel Glucklich, Sacred Pain and the Phenomenal Self, Harvard Theological Review, 91:4 (1998) 389-412. Ariel Glucklich, Self and Sacrifice: A Phenomenological Psychology of Sacred Pain, Harvard Theological Review, 92:4 (1999) 479-506.

[21] There is some detailed dispute re how early the development comes. Cf. K Morrison, Constructing Empathy, Journal of Religion 2004 (see on line version).

[22] Jean Delumeau, Sin and Fear: the emergence of a Western guilt culture 13th – 18th centuries, St.Martin's Press, New York, 1990.

According to Delumeau, the subjects of sermons, used by the Church to oppress people, included: death, no longer seen as natural, but as a punishment for original sin; horror of the physical, in birth and death, with a morbid insistence on gruesome details. Sermons expressed loathing of the female body and a male aversion for menstrual blood. People were taught the art of dying, and, though the Renaissance rejected morbid language about death, the Church maintained a macabre tradition. Franciscans emphasised the tortured body of Jesus, focussing on decomposition rather than resurrection. People were filled with Apocalyptic anxieties. They believed in fleshly resurrection. Violence and the macabre were everywhere. It was an evangelism of fear in an age of extreme pessimism.
While Erasmus and Cervantes praised folly as a safety valve for people, the Church condemned it as sin. The 4th Lateran Council 1214 made confession obligatory for mortal sin, and prescribed penitential practices, public and private. The culture of guilt among the people meant a real growth of clerical power, seen especially in the power of clerical absolution. Luther saw the practice of confession as the most powerful weapon used by a domineering Roman hierarchy.
People were encouraged to keep on examining their consciences, especially in the area of sexual sins. Even within marriage, sexuality was suspect. Women were identified with sin; beware contact with them!

Augustine's influence was supreme in 16th, 17th 18th cc. and this influence led people to be feel guilty and become very pessimistic. His emphasis on Original Sin, meant that childhood was devalued.

The mentality abroad in these centuries was that "Many are called; and few are chosen!" Preachers insisted that only a very few would be saved. Grignion de Montfort claimed "to have recorded the tiny number of the chosen: *It is so tiny, so very tiny, that were we to know it we would be stricken with grief....scarcely one in a thousand is chosen."*

Preachers stressed that humans were criminal and God to be feared. A French preacher, Tronson, challenged his congregation in this way:

> If sin is so horrible in itself that it could raise the fury of the Father against his Son,…what sort of horror will you give to God, you a creature already horrid in your birth, already banished and separated from Him, who have an accursed heritage, intolerable in the eyes of God?

All the time God was presented as a punishing God , to whom humans had to make atonement.

A Frenchman, Nicole, claimed that "Jesus never laughed". Of Jesus he preached: It has been noted that Jesus never laughed. Nothing has equalled the seriousness of His life: it is clear that He had no interest in pleasure, entertainment and anything that can divert the spirit. Jesus' life was completely given over to God and the misery of men…"

Around and from 14th century, some very bad things happened to people – pestilence, schism and wars over roughly 100+ years and more. The most dramatic of them was probably the Black Death – the Plague – 1348 to1350. It's not right just to say the Black Death. There were many such plagues. And they virtually decimated the Catholic population, and they almost cut in half the number of pastoral workers in the Church. They died suddenly, and this had an enormous impact upon the people's ponderings. They said: "What have we done to deserve this? Our sins must have been much worse than we imagined. And we could not have atoned for them adequately. So we must have done things that were terribly God-awful and we didn't know what they were."

It was thought that we must have been sinning without realising it, and that the malice of our sins was greater than we had ever imagined. Otherwise these evils would not be happening. Particular actions were classed as sins. They were now called mortal, not in the ancient sense of excluding people from relationship with the church community, but in the sense of excluding them from eternal life. Examinations of conscience abounded. The danse macabre, Totentanz, Grim Reaper condemning all classes of people. Contempt for, and flight from, the world. Ars moriendi: think well on it! The 'devotio moderna' (Imitation of Christ) is the fruit of this. Scrupulosity and ceremonialism.

The result can be termed CONTRACTUAL THEOLOGY. A set of duties for us, in regard to God, the implications of which will be judged by the going standards of criminal law. God is imaged as (angry) Judge/Accountant in relation to the mass of people on the way to being damned. Redemption = preservation of the few, as an elite, from such dire consequences. Only a minority would be saved. The religious self-image is

one of 'victim and criminal'. The child became the scapegoat (needs baptism and religious education!). Kenosis??? Victim souls???
This can now be termed a COLLECTIVE OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS, with massive compensatory practices, such as dread of sin, affirmation of enormous guilt while not being clear how it was contracted, etc. Mother Church used such motives to keep people on the straight and narrow, and subordinate...

So people started to call their seemingly God-awful deeds by a name that you've heard a lot. They called them mortal sins, and you can hear what mortal really means in this context. You see, previously in the early Church, they had talked of sin as mortal, because it excluded people from active life in the Church community. And now they use the word 'mortal' about sin as excluding people from eternal life in God's community in Heaven, and this is a new understanding of the word 'mortal'.

So they started examining their consciences, and saying: 'Was it this? Was it that action? Was it this procedure? Was it that one, that offended God and brought all these disasters.' And they started worrying about it all and with simple people they had public sort of theatre about this in the town or village square. It was called in France the '*danse macabre*', or in Germany the '*totendanz*' – the dance of the dead – and what would happen would be that the Grim Reaper would be there on the stage representing death or God, and they'd bring up before the Grim Reaper a representative of every trade and every profession in the town and of course they'd all go under, with great support from the audience. It was really recommending people to flee from this world and to repent and atone for everything and prepare to die because you're not ready – you're not ready to face God – so, "think on it well"- that kind of manoeuvre. You may have heard of something that is called in the history of spirituality the '*devotio moderna*'. It's far from 'modern', so don't translate it literally as contemporary. Examples of it would be that little book called <u>The Imitation of Christ</u> – that type of stuff comes right out of this mood.

What emerges from all this is an incredible scrupulosity**,** a neurosis of over-anxiety and fear. If I don't know what I'm doing that's offending God, then I'd better be more scrupulous than I used to be. And there's an incredible ceremonialism. I've got to do things rubrically right, in order to make sure God isn't angry with me.

Now that results in two things, one theological, and one psychological, and they're both bad.

The theological one is called contractual theology, which means that the relations we have with God are governed by contract. It's a set of duties in regard to God, and we'll be judged by the standards of criminal law, as to whether we did those duties or didn't do them properly. And God is imagined as a judge and an accountant at the same time, and God is condemning people for not having kept their side of the contract. And the impression was – and I'd have to say it was for most of the millennium – that the majority of people would ultimately be damned. I don't believe that for one moment – but it was certainly around, and redemption was the preservation of an elite few from consequences like that. Only a minority would get to Heaven.

So, the religious self-image is not just negative or a spared victim, but it's actually a spared criminal, who is not going to make it, and will be found out eventually anyhow. It's interesting – I quote this from Delumeau, because I'd never be game to say it myself - that the child became the scapegoat of all of this, and they looked on every child born into this world as born bad, and as in as immediate need of baptism as you can provide it, and after baptism in immediate need of religious education to make the child conform to the proper lines. And, if you are ever doing a pre-history of child abuse, you've got it right there, in a very, very sad way. It's the roots of that whole mentality, from which we have not quite emerged. And the spiritual approach was kenosis or self-emptying – and you are no damned good - it's back to William Campbell's "You are all bastards but God loves you anyway –some of you, at least!" But that's where it all comes from.

And the other side of it, the psychological comment here, is that what was happening in Europe over those centuries, could be called a collective obsessional neurosis. And if you start putting that into the whole population and the whole people, you are going to get them living with massive fear and massive confession of enormous guilt, without quite knowing how they did it, and massive compensation**,** and Mother Church using all of this to keep people on the straight and narrow, and extremely subordinated. That's really how it came out, and if you want the documentation, Delumeau is the best collection of sources for you.

Delumeau concludes his book by remarking that fear and guilt dominated these centuries. Preachers "spoke more of the Passion of the Saviour than his resurrection, more of sin than of pardon, more of the Judge

than the Father, more of Hell than of Paradise." It is no wonder that Christians in the West eventually rejected such an oppressive doctrinal campaign.

Now, when you get to the 19th and 20th centuries, you have to add something to all of this. With the rise of what we call modernity – just let me say that I used the word "modernity" for that whole way of living in Western Europe, that is largely the result of revolutions – the industrial revolution, above all; the French revolution; the technological revolution; the philosophical revolution in Kant and Hegel; the Enlightenment and so on – the whole changed culture there.

Now, from the start, in 19th century, the official Vatican took a very negative view of modernity, and wanted to protect the whole Church from modernity, and largely stop them having any contact with it – and you can see how an atonement model of living would be a tremendous antidote to modernity. And this is the fortress Church notion. So they said: " No! Don't touch it! Don't buy into it!" And we will have a Catholic ghetto, and in compensation for the demands of all that, the Popes themselves created three devotions against modernity. And the three devotions are:

- Devotion to the Sacred Heart;
- Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary;
- Devotion to the person of the Pope.

You can remember, I'm sure, that you've got the nine first Fridays coming up at this time from Margaret Mary Alacoque. By the way, research on her statements found a fascinating thing – that she actually wrote in her memoirs that she thought that Jesus had appeared to her and told her that if people did the nine first Fridays, they'd be OK when they died – "if I rightly recall". I think she'd better "rightly recall", or a lot of people are going to have her! But "if I rightly recall" is in her own writing.

But when you get to the Blessed Virgin Mary, you've got the enormous series of Marian apparitions in 19th century and they are nearly all in France, they are nearly all to children, and they are nearly all to illiterate people; and then you get the dogma of the Immaculate Conception largely emerging out of all this mindset.

And then you get the Pope, presenting himself as the bulwark against modernity and infallible in doing so, and defining his own infallibility in the 1st Vatican Council, and then demanding devotion to his own infallibility in that sense with the Syllabus of Errors and everything that goes with it.

This is the basis of the piety of the Church that I think we inherited, and it is still basically around. It's like the late Middle Ages one, updated if you like. But there are a couple of things about this that need to be said, and the sociologists are now saying it.

Normally speaking, in a development of piety in the Church, it's a grassroots, spontaneous thing – it's what the people do and then gets recognized afterwards.This was NOT. This was a top-down, managed expression of piety. In other words, the Vatican got the idea, that this piety would be good for the people, and pushed it onto the people. And of course the people had to obey it, because the atonement mindset said that you had to. [23]

Also, it was an attempt, if you like, to go back to the Middle Ages, to the sentiment and splendour of the Middle Ages, as against modernity. Well, there are lots of good things about the Middle Ages, but I don't think that you can live like that now – at least, not in a real world – but that is the whole kind of scaffolding or support-structure that was going to package the atonement mentality and carry it into the future.

Once you get hold of this concept, the footnoting of it could go as long as you wanted to go, but it's largely reinforcing the same basic idea.

It is important to look into the scriptures to see what foundation there might be for this atonement mentality.

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[23] See W.McSweeney, Catholic piety in the 19th c., Social Compass, 1987, 203-210.

3. THE BIBLICAL THEME OF 'REDEMPTION'

Introductory note

Supporters of an atonement mentality have often used scripture to back their case. I want here to make a critical assessment of the scriptural sources so adduced. This critical assessment is based on contemporary exegesis.

In a following study, I will construct an alternative to the atonement model, which is the fruit of sound biblical interpretation. But it is important here to look at some of the textual evidence and just see what atonement theorists are alleging, and that it is not really found in the texts.

After an introductory note, I will look at two issues from the Old Testament and two issues from the New Testament.

There are many different traditions in the scriptures. We are now accustomed to live with a certain pluralism of many different visions, theologies, approaches, and so on, that can be found there. Some of those **traditions are mutually contradictory**. You cannot get it altogether, like many different versions of a general harmonious approach. There are some areas in the scriptures that say something that other areas flatly contradict. There is a **dialectic** between the two, a **balance** between the two. You have to discern which one is the real intent of the whole burden of the tradition at large. It's important to know who put what in the Old Testament, and why, and who said it wasn't right.

There are **some texts**, and even some traditions of texts, that actually would **support an atonement mentality**. The advocates of that mentality have 'proof-texted' their case from them, picked up texts hither and yon, and packaged them all up and said: "There it is ..it's in the scriptures". However, if you study the scriptures more critically, you find **a number of texts**, that are there intentionally to **refute those positions**, and if you get the dialectic or balance between the two, you get the real burden of the scriptural message. That is the intention of this reflection.

Old Testament

Deuteronomic versus Priestly tradition

In the Old Testament, there are two traditions. One is called the **Deuteronomic tradition**, the other is called the **Priestly tradition.** This reflection is an attempt to present the riches of the Deuteronomic tradition.

This tradition gives us the so-called 'narrative' or 'historical' books of the OT. The **Deuteronomic tradition**, as it is called, is **pre-exilic**. It's probably 8th century or 7th century. The **priestly tradition** is **post-exilic**, and is really a variant from that Deuteronomic approach. It is much closer to atonement thinking than the Deuteronomists ever were.

In the Deuteronomic or the main-line tradition of the narrative material in OT, the whole topic is a **love affair.** It is **a love-affair of God with Israel**, God's People. At the same time, there is a sub-plot, which is a **love-affair of Israel with other gods**. Now that plot/sub-plot connection gives rise to a question which is the whole heart of

the matter of the narrative tradition – "**How** can God continue to love Israel, after Israel has done the dirty on God and fallen in love with other gods?" The problem is the legitimacy of God's continuing to love a people that doesn't love God. It's a beautiful question when you think about it. And it is not a question of <u>does</u> God continue to love Israel, because everybody knows that God does. The problem for the writers is **why**, and **how** could God continue to love like that, and the real revelation in the D tradition is that God's original love for God's people was called *'Hesed'*.

Now *'Hesed* is a rather difficult word to translate. It is often translated as "mercy". That is not a very good translation or a very adequate one, anyway. Hesed originally referred to the kind of love you can have in the family. It implies **kinship-love**. It implies **bonding** as physically close as kinship. So "mercy" isn't quite saying it fully. Hesed is coming out of the nature of the case and the tightness of the bonds of kinship. It is that kind of love.

Now, if God's original love for Israel was '*hesed*, what the **revelation** says is that ***'hesed* demands that God be faithful to *'hesed'***. It implies a 'fidelity', and it implies that it will not be withdrawn, no matter what the beloved might do or not do.

This is a beautiful appreciation of what love is all about. Real love takes the form of mercy and grace, if you could even hyphenate that phrase **mercy-and-grace.** It is more than mercy. It is the graciousness of mercy. There is no hatred, no anger in it, and there's no unforgiven-ness in it. There's a knowledge that continuity will happen, no matter what.

The Hebrew language uses the word ***emet,*** which means **faithfulness**, fidelity, truth, the continuing reality of – something like that - to express that dimension of *'hesed'* that is the faithfulness inherent in *'hesed'*. **God's love is** "**the *emet* of *'hesed***'. God is always faithful, no matter what Israel does. And that would include idolatry, it would include faithlessness, it would include public community sin and everything else. The "*emet* of *'hesed*" is too big for all of that to be withdrawn. And I think that is a most lovely revelation, frankly.

In the **Septuagint (LXX),** which is the Greek translation of these Hebrew Scripture texts, obviously the writers are pushing their luck in Greek to capture what is nearly uncapturable in another language, and they come up with make-up words. For example, the word for "mercy" in Greek is "*eleos*", merciful", and the writer in the LXX put "*polueleos"* to mean "**manifoldly merciful**", to try and capture a bit of it, but it doesn't really quite say it as powerfully as the Hebrew. Similarly, with *alethinos* that is from *aletheia*, which is the Greek word for "truth". But if you pull it apart in Greek, it means "non-darkness". *Lethe* is "darkness" in Greek. If you put "a" in front of it, you negate "darkness". It's a darkness remover. There is a kind of permanent "shining upon" that is part of God's love, and that includes **God's permanent willingness to forgive**. I can almost say that for this God it is a fairly minor event. It is as if God would say: "What the hell is all this fuss about forgiveness? I mean, that's an easy job. I love you bigger than that." That's the kind of revelation that starts to come through. We often translate, in English Bibles, the words *'hesed w emet* as "mercy" and "fidelity " or "truth". I think the "and" is misplaced. The **"faithfulness" is the quality of the *'hesed***, the *emet* of the *'hesed*, the fidelity of God's love, and it's because of that, that **God always is on side**, no matter what.

This is the heart of the **Deuteronomist (D) tradition.** It is really the **core** of the whole message of Hebrew narrative. It is the fundamental revelation of the Bible.

Now, with the **Priestly (P) tradition**, things are not quite the same. This tradition is post-exilic, and that the people have come back from Babylon. Their main agenda is to rebuild the **Temple** and get it going again. Now, to do that, you need people called **priests**, and you need them to do something, namely to conduct **sacrifices** in the Temple. The emphasis of the priestly theology is very different from the Deuteronomist tradition. It always says that the people have to **do** something for God, before God will continue God's relationship with the people. In other words, you have to **earn** it, and you've got to earn it by something you **do,** and only when you do it, and do it right, will God pick up the continuing relationship with you. That assumes that the relationship is broken, which the Deuteronomist tradition never did.

The Priestly tradition is the **less persuasive** of the two traditions. I say "less persuasive" because it is obviously **anthropomorphic.** It comes out of an assumption about the way **humans** relate, rather than out of a revelation about the way **God** relates. It's pushing God into **our** models, rather than telling us about **God's** models, and that's a very, very different procedure.

There was always a **tension** in the later narrative accounts of the bible, between those two traditions – the D tradition and the P tradition – and you never get a speculative resolution of that tension. But you do get one in practice, and you get it particularly in **the Psalter**, in the psalms. And the **resolution-in-practice** is in favour of the **D tradition**. It's rediscovering God all along - that "God's saving love endures forever". Do you remember those psalms, whose every verse ends up with the refrain: "God's love endures forever"? That's exactly what it's saying. It's the *emet* of *'hesed.* It's nothing that we **do**.

The Psalms also say that we "shelter under God's wings", and that "righteousness and justice are the foundations of God's throne". It's interesting, in the psalms, that "**righteousness and justice**" start coming through, and these really are ways of expressing what the ***emet* of *'hesed*** is all about. God would not be "honest to God", to use a modern expression, if God was not like that – God would not be just to a divine kind of justice, if God did not continue in that *'hesed* in *emet* with us. It becomes almost the beginnings of an awareness of what the divine attributes really are all about.

Once again, we could switch from the Hebrew to the Greek of the LXX translation. There *'hesed* is usually translated in terms of *eleos*, which means "merciful" in Greek. But there is a kind of rider to it, or a balancing term – and it's not "faithfulness" this time, but it's "**goodness**". That **God is good**. You might say, "Well, that's a fairly trite statement" - but not for these writers and these psalmists. When the LXX translated "good" in Hebrew into Greek, they used a very interesting word, viz. ***chrestos.*** Well, when you get a writer like St. Luke, he picks that up powerfully, and he actually says in one text, that we have to be "*chrestos* like the *christos*". It's really revealing a certain kind of God, if I could say so. I think that's what these texts are really all about.

That is the **core** of what is disclosed. Everything else is almost like a series of tangents off that one. You either believe that or you don't. If you **believe** it, it's a kind of **gift of grace**. And if you don't believe it, it's probably, not that you didn't get the gift of grace, but because there are certain **human blockages** to it, and your own experiences of life haven't been quite near enough to that, to really make it credible. **Hans Spieckermann has** called it <u>God's Steadfast Love".</u>

I think "steadfast" is a very good expression of it basically. It's too steadfast to be worried by disaffection or sin or something like that. However, that's not the message we've given the people – we've given the people the message that they can **control** God's reactions by what they **do**. That is complete rubbish, when you think about it. We can't affect God by our sins.

Later Prophetic versus early Prophetic tradition

Let us now look at the **later or great prophetic tradition, vis a vis** some of the questions raised by the quite early prophets.

In the early prophetic times, in the 8th century, **Amos** constantly was saying: "God will destroy the people that used to be God's people. God's <u>had</u> you. You've been too bad." And from that point, as you get into the major prophets, especially the post-exilic ones, the question comes up that has to be thought about: "If we believe that God is the God of Deuteronomy, would God really do that?" And the question comes quite simply: "**doom or love?"** "What's in the future for us with God?"

That is really where the great prophets zoom in, and they zoom in very much in favour of **love**. We can look briefly at **Hosea, Jeremiah and 2nd Isaiah.**

Hosea is really an extraordinary collection of prophecies in this regard. He describes God's relationship with Israel in terms of a marriage. There's a power and a beauty in his writing that you would be hard to match in any literature. Hosea basically says that God **could not** withdraw God's love. God would be inwardly torn apart, if God even thought of doing that. And it's not possible for God to do it. You might say: "But God can do all things!", but Hosea says: "No, God can't do that one. It isn't possible for God." It's not just saying that God in fact has decided not to. He is actually claiming that God **could** not do it. I think this is an addition to the earlier

revelation of faith – that the **love** is therefore not just "not extinguished", but it is "**not extinguishable**", and if that dawns on you, it will change your entire perspective on everything.

One beautiful way of putting that was that Hosea has three children. All of his children were given very interesting names. The first child, a son, was called *Jezreel* – "God sows". The second, a daughter, was called *Lo-Ra'hamim,* and the third, a son, was called *Lo-'Ami.*

Ra'hamim is the word in Hebrew for "tender, merciful", but, once again, it is a tenderness of a special type. It is a very felt, sensitive kind of understanding and compassion. *Re'hem,* the root of it, means, in Hebrew, both the heart of a father and the womb of a mother. And if you put those two notions together, *Ra'hamim* is the adjective from that. That's why it's so hard to get one word for it. But, if you were trying, it would be in the dimension of sensitivity, understanding – the Italians would say ***simpatico*** – and it would be closer than any English word.

Hosea was told by Yahweh to call this child of his *Lo-Rahamim* (Unloved).(1.6) (*Lo* in Hebrew means 'not'). This child is the one who is not the recipient of *Ra'hamim.* And yet at the same time it **is** the child of Hosea, and although it is really saying "not my child", but it actually **is** my child. There's a kind of **internal paradox** in the whole thing. You might <u>think</u> this is not a recipient of mercy, but in fact it is.

And it is the same with *Lo-'Ami* (No people of mine). *Am* in Hebrew is 'The People'. The '*i*' at the end makes it 'My People'. If you put *Lo* in front of it, you have 'not my people'.
But 'not my people' **is** my people, because it is my child. Yahweh says to *Lo-'Ami: "I will say to 'No people of mine'…you are my people"*.(2.23)

You might think the logic pointed in the direction of 'not my people', but it is my people all right. It is an extraordinary reflection on the **unremovableness of the given love of God.** Later in the story, after Hosea had lured back his own unfaithful bride, the one who was Unloved, he call her his loved-one again. Yahweh too says: " *I will love Unloved"*, whom he later called "Beloved".

Hosea has much poetry of this kind, like: "**Israel's love for God** is like the morning cloud or the early dew that goes away, but **God's love for Israel** is as sure as the dawn or the showers."(6.3) It is a beautiful piece of expression, and he plays with the whole notion, and says that if God ever was angry with the people, God would have to repent of the anger, because it would be wrong for God to feel like that. Hosea has taken the whole **repentance theme** out of the human world and put it into God's world.

And so God shouldn't do that sort of thing. It would be sinful and wrong divinely for God even to think about it, and God starts saying to the people: **"How could I give you up?**
I can't do it!"(11.8) And that, quite literally, is the point. **God can't do it.** And in a marvellous passage, Hosea says: This is because **"God is God, not man".(**11.9) That's the way we read it, but actually the Hebrew expression man there is *ish*, which means 'masculine man', or if you like 'business man'. It's not just saying: "God is God, not human". It's saying: **"God is God, and God doesn't behave the way business men behave",** which means entering into **contracts** and deals and conditional clauses.
There's an **absolute givenness** here.

And on the basis of that, Hosea goes on and says that the **relationship between God and the people** is like a **betrothal**, and he says: "Well, it always was, but this is **a new kind of betrothal**". It is a betrothal in righteousness and justice, which are the derivatives of *emet* and *'hesed.* And it's not the righteousness and justice that **Israel** practises. It's the kind that **God** practises. So that the whole mystery is **from betrayal to betrothal,** not from **our** point of view, but from **God's** point of view. It was always betrothal all along, and it includes in this new betrothal **a promise**, that it will never be otherwise. That's the *emet* of *'hesed* once again, as the prophet re-affirms it.

So, what Hosea is saying is that the **relationship with God**, even in a people that has done the wrong thing by God, is **not a blind relationship**. It's not a no-relationship of obedience, but it's a **relationship**, that Hosea calls, that **of a "listening heart"** (the *da'ath* of the Lord!) *Da'ath* means 'knowledge'. It's actually the word for 'sexual intercourse' in Hebrew. It's that kind of **intimate, experiential knowledge of God** from the **inside** of God. It's a beautiful expression, when you think about it.

Hosea is not slow in saying things fairly graphically and fairly fully in that way. But it's really **a re-affirmation** of that side of the tradition.

Jeremiah continues what Hosea was saying, and he goes beyond saying 'a new betrothal'. He says it's a **new covenant.** "Deep within them I will plant my law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people…I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind" (31: 33,34)

Covenant is much **more than** a **contract**. It's a **new bonding** in the nature of the case **between God and the people**, and the result of that new bonding is, in the words of **Ezekiel:** "I will put in you a new heart, not like the heart of stone that you used to have, but **a heart of flesh**."(11.19) And it's because of that, that you can have this listening heart, this experience of God. And, with the new kind of heart, **God and the people can be bonded heart to heart**, and the new heart in the people is a heart of '*hesed* and *emet* at the same time.

Jeremiah raises the question, - I think mostly because of his own life experience – that, even given all of this new covenant and new heart and the rest of it, **could people still suffer**? And could bad things still happen to good Jews? He knows they could, but he doesn't quite know **why.** But he leaves it there, as an as yet unanswered question.

2nd Isaiah is the name we give to an important set of prophecies. We shall stay with them here, since they are often adduced by atonement theorists as foundation for their case.

In the collected prophecies of 2nd Isaiah - what we are talking about is in our bibles from chapter 40 to chapter 55 of Isaiah - these were not written or spoken by the author of the first 39 chapters. It has a totally different character, and a totally different style. It should be in a separate book. That's why we largely call it – the 2nd Isaiah. Some of the most beautiful passages in that 2nd Isaiah are four songs, or four hymns, and they are called the **Songs of the Servant of Yahweh**, sometimes called the suffering servant of Yahweh. After he fourth song there comes chapter 54 with the promise of God to the woman, and the woman is Israel – really Mother Zion.

Now this is a collection of oracles. They were given at Babylon, while the Exile was still on, and the Jews were under Persian domination, and that means in 6th century BCE. Now the leader or ruler of Babylon at the time was **Cyrus.** I don't think Cyrus had any profound religious conversion, or anything like that, but he was a good politician, and like a good politician he **favoured minority groups**. So, he decided to let them, as deportees, return to their own country, and, when they got back to their own country, to gather resources together and rebuild their Temple again. And when they built their temple again, they could finally dedicate it again and then get around to building the city walls and setting up shop for the future.

I think it's important to **read** the Songs of the Servant of Yahweh, and the subsequent chapter 54, **in the context of** that **return from Babylon under Cyrus**. Often those texts are read in a Christian sense, as if the prophet had Jesus in mind from the start. He had never heard of him.

Now **who** is the Servant of Yahweh? It has always been a little bit tricky to answer that question, because the Servant clearly is **an individual**, **and** yet the servant has the dimensions of **a corporate personality**, which includes a whole lot of people together. A number of different people could be the Servant, as far as the text goes, but the original obvious servant is **Cyrus.** So, instead of piously thinking it has to be Jesus, we need to accept that the Servant is Cyrus, a pagan ruler, who didn't have any faith.

And Cyrus, I think, is the **principle of a new beginning** for the people in a new and positive history. And they reflected that it's always been a bit like that in Jewish history. "Every time we get into a mess" they thought, "God gives us a new leader – sometimes from one of our own, sometimes not, - and it will probably keep on being like that", so that the prophet imagines a model of a servant like that, that emerges whenever required. And in the prophet's mind, this emerging person includes all of Israel at the time, so that, right now, the **Remnant** that's left over after the Exile, and is going back to rebuild the temple, is **like the Servant of Yahweh**, and <u>they</u> will be the **beginning of whatever future Israel has**, back in its own land.

So, in his poem, song, hymn, whatever, he comes up with the **figure of the servant**, that stands for all of those people, and he develops the figure in a purely literary kind of a way. Now, it's very interesting that this servant in the poetry runs into **a difficult period of time**; he runs into defamation, distress, **persecution**, torture even – and

finally **death**. And at the same time, if you read the text, God seems, through the servant's strange life, to cause positive things to happen for the whole people. So that good pious Catholics, reading it today, say: "Ha! Paschal Mystery! - through death to resurrection." It's not that clear! It's just a simple elementary statement that Jewish life is a bit like that.

And then the question comes: **How do we read this**? What's the meaning of the fact that our leaders, who take us into the new period of history, really go through bad times – they get persecuted –they even get killed – and yet good seems to come out of it all. How do we put that together? How do we interpret it?

Here is where the difficulties start to come and you have to be careful about the accuracy of the text.

There are **two voices** speaking in the song in response to that question. **One** is the voice of a group that calls itself **"we"** like a choir. And t**he other** is the **voice of God**. And they don't add up. They are not meant to. One is the contrast background for the other.

Now **the group** interprets the situation this way. It **sees the servant** as the **substitute for themselves**. The group feels that they should be chastised by God – they should atone for, and expiate their faults and their sins, but this person, the Servant, is going to take their place, and substitute for them, and be chastised for them. "He will be pierced for our faults, he will be crushed for our sins". This is the classic atonement line.

Now he can do so effectively, because he is sinless himself – because he has always done God's will – and "many will profit by his suffering."

That's not something that God demands, but it does seem to be a fact. And it does seem to be that it was **unique** to this servant, because, it was never written about in kings or prophets of the past, that someone could actually be substituted for another's guilt, and God would go along with that – and that's the voice of the group.

This is at the end of the 52nd chapter and in most of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. [It is one of the chosen readings for Good Friday afternoon liturgy.]

Commentators

Now, some commentators say that the God of love, the *'hesed* God, freely decided to accept the offering of the Servant's substitutive deed. They say that it doesn't get beyond preliminary reflections or imagination in the 2nd Isaiah author, and the whole thing hasn't been grounded much - it's a hunch. I don't think they've reflected on the fact that it would be **highly unethical** to demand that **one person should be killed for the sins of another** person, but that's beyond the level of reflection of the text.

The idea actually was **never** picked up again in the OT. It may come up in a very minor sort of way in the **Machabee literature**. In the 2nd Book of Machabees, we have the seven brothers, and others with them, seemingly able to end the persecution of the whole people through their sufferings, but it's not a very strong link. In the 4th book of Machabees, which is apocryphal literature, the land is purified by the stoic control of emotions exercised by victims of persecutions. This is close to the **Greek-Roman ideal of the 'noble death'**. Again the connections are not strong.

Beyond 2nd Isaiah, the **position of that vocal group** in the song **doesn't** seem to **reappear in Jewish theology**. It seems to be a bit of a ring-in, if you could say so, and that's why other commentators, I think, have what appeals to me as a much better approach.

The other commentators say that the group, that is talking like this, about substitution, is actually a **pagan group**. And it is a pagan notion, **not an authentic Jewish notion**. Probably the pagans concerned come from Babylon, and this idea was picked up by some Jews, when they were in exile in Babylon. That would mean that the end of chapter 52 and all of chapter 53 are like an implicit **quotation**, and with an omission of the quotation marks, when it was written. This is paganism talking, not authentic Jewish faith, and then, when you get to chapter 54, about the promise to the woman, the woman being a word for Israel, this is the conscious **refutation** by the prophet, of the pagan position about substitution, that has been just before.

Let us get look at **54th chapter**, because I think it is such **positive** thing. The 54th chapter says there was **never a change in God's attitude to Israel**. The love was <u>always</u> there. It was like the true love of a true husband for his

wife. And the man's wife is due to be cast out. "Yes, for a brief moment I did perhaps seem to abandon you",(v.7) but not really –"now with great-'*hesed* I will gather you in.(v.8) For one small moment I might have seemed to you to hide my face from you (or to be sorry for you), but now, with great everlasting '*hesed,* I have compassion on you, your restorer."

This **is a covenant of salvation**, not an act of compassion. It's like the original and eternal covenant of God with creation, celebrated by Noah after the flood. It's a lovely thing. LXX here calls God *Ileos,* gracious, in an obvious make-up from *Eleos.*

Well, if you read it that way, you think the whole text starts to make considerably more sense. An unfortunate substitutional reading of this text has coloured the interpretation, and made it look like an atonement.

But it's a relatively new achievement of scripture scholarship to say that. The first reference I found to this interpretation was in 1993 in a book, "Le Christ est mort pour tous", by a French author, **Pierre Ternant** .What he was saying is that this **whole atonement mentality,** that we've been practising in our devotions, **is paganism**, and that the **sources** of it in Isaiah are actually **pagan sources**, which have been put in Isaiah in order to be refuted. We have read it, as if it was the thing that God was telling us to do, which it was not. That simply pulls the carpet right out from under any appeal to Isaiah, as a support for the atonement mentality.

I think this is a very good position. **Pere Boismard**, who died in March 2004, was the old man of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. He wrote a review of Ternant's book and he said: "I agree absolutely and without reserve with the position taken in this book." And he went on and threw in a few other ideas on the same lines himself. And he said: "We have got to get past this thinking. This is pure paganism!" (P.Ternant, Le Christ est mort 'pour tous'. Du serviteur Israel au serviteur Jesus, Cerf, Paris, 1993. Reviewed by M.E.Boismard, Revue Biblique, 1996, 616-618)

In saying that, I have to express my own chagrin about the liturgy of Good Friday afternoon. This liturgy gives us exactly the pagan text and without the refutation, and almost hangs it on people, who often come to Church only on Good Friday afternoon, and they just don't know any better. Can you see the grief I have here? It is worth the effort to pull it apart and just realize the **non-foundation** of this mentality.

If you start thinking about what would be the pagan group, that was coming up with this, it could be nearly anyone. There was a lot of this thinking among the Greeks. It's in Aeschylus; it's in Euripides; it's right through the heroic poets. It's in the Greek literature like Aesop, Hesiod and others, and it's in the Hittite sources. It's in the whole *pharmakos* scape-goating themes. I think it's nearly **archetypal,** and nearly every group is going to come up with that **atonement substitution** motif, unless they have a revelation that would contradict it. The **glory of Israel** is that it had the **revelation,** which contradicts it, and the terrible part about **Christian devotional tradition** is that it has picked up the **paganism, without the refutation**.

If you really studied the alleged background of the atonement approach in Isaiah you would find that it's not there. I don't think this has been said far and wide enough yet. To think that God would require that Jesus had to substitute for us, in order to make the atonement that we couldn't do, is actually **paganism.**

I think **Anselm** got hooked by too innocent a reading of the sources, and, of course, having put it together, in that incredible piece of reparation-logic that he came up with, it stuck, and it's there until this present day in our mentality.

What I have been trying to lead to, was an examination of some of the texts that are classically adduced, by those who want to push the atonement thing, and the texts do not vindicate it. In fact, it shows you, if you pull the texts apart, that they've largely missed the whole point, even in the texts that they would like to use strongly. I think that it's quite educational to see that. This is **not an emotional reactive position** that we are in, to drop atonement. It is a very **reasoned, worked out position**, that there was never any advocacy of atonement there from the start. It's extraordinary, when you think about it, but it would change, if you had a community that had seen all this together and celebrated Good Friday accordingly – it would be fascinating.

New Testament

I would now like to spend a little bit of time on some of the **New Testament work** in the same vein, because once again I think there is a beautiful tradition of **hopeful love** that is non-demanding. In the New Testament we can see that we **don't have to atone to God**, and there is **no notion** of **Jesus** having to be a **substitution** for us sinners. I think a lot of New Testament texts have been wrongly adduced in favour of atonement.

Before we get onto the texts, which are mainly in Paul, just a preliminary note that might be the whole point actually. A massive amount of work that has been done in the last fifteen years or so on a new vision of the **historical Jesus.** Jesus lived and Jesus died, or was killed or however you put it. But what's the story? **Why did he die**? We need to know this in historical terms, rather than in textual interpretation afterwards.

In Jesus' time, the **Roman Imperial system**, the Roman Empire, was the equivalent of a trans-national corporation, probably the only real one, and it was a **totalitarian** system, and its **economic ambitions** had literally gone wild. It was going to run the whole known world. It had **colonized** most of it anyway. And just before Jesus came along, it had **colonized Palestine, including Galilee**. And what the Romans did, when they came to all these places, including Galilee, was that they **wrecked the local economy**, so that the people had no ways and means of continuing their own culture, and had to be dependent on the Romans for survival.

Now the effect of that is to make the **local people to live below the poverty line**. They lived below what we'd call the poverty line today, and below what they would have called the poverty line, in their own time as far as I can see. So you get dispossessed, de-cultured, injured, abused little people, and **this is where Jesus comes in**. Jesus is not only accidentally born as one of this mob, but **he embraces the cause of these dispossessed marginalized people** and he says to them: "You are still worthwhile, and your God is still with you, and your God still loves you." That is the extraordinary **context** of his ministry.

Well, obviously a message like that was effective. We have plenty of evidence for that. People started to gather around Jesus and feel loved. And this represents a **potential challenge to the Roman management**. When I say "management", I would also like to include **some of the Jewish leadership**, who were literally collaborators with the Romans, and probably for reasons that, in conscience, they thought were pretty good reasons. But they were there, and they saw that Jesus was creating a stir, and they thought: "This is no good, so let's put him down". So what you get is **a political assassination** of **someone who stood up**, in the name of **justice**, for these **dispossessed little people**. That is the historical record.

The answer to the question **"Who killed Jesus?"** is **the big system**, and they killed him because of what he was doing with and for the little people whom he loved. The little people didn't kill him. The big system killed him, because he loved the little people. This is basically the point. So that, if we were to put ourselves imaginatively into the interaction with Jesus, we would realize that **we** are not the continuation of the big system that killed Jesus, not by any stretch of the imagination. We are the continuation of the ordinary, little people, the ones Jesus stood up for, and, because of his fidelity, because he wouldn't back off his standing up for them, and he was politically assassinated.

So he got done in for us, because he loved us. In that sense I think Paul is right when he says: "He loved me and delivered himself for me" – me, and all the other little people, that were getting put under the heel of the big systems.

So, I would say it is important historically to realize that there is **no case** for saying that **Jesus** ever had an **atonement mentality**. That's imagination. Jesus did not have an 'atonement mentality' and he did not ask us to have one. The atonement mentality is coming out of all that millennium of reflection, that went back and interpreted Jesus in its own paradigm. It is simply not true that Jesus wandered around as a child in the holy family, thinking that he was here on earth to atone for our sins. It is simply not true historically that he ever thought that he would have to die on the cross and be crucified in order to save us from Hell. We have said this, but there is historically no foundation whatever for this. **Jesus got done in**, **because he made a political option**, **and the management didn't like it** and never did. The problem today is not to tell people to repent of their sins, and thank Jesus for suffering to atone for our sins. The problem today is to say to people: "Are you ready to make a political option for which you could get crucified?" Is that what the imitation of Christ is all about? It's a totally different slant and perception of the data of the historical life of Jesus.

Actually, the whole mystery is about two things. It's about **justice and fidelity** when you boil it down. It's fidelity to the cause of justice. Well, this is the **Deuteronomist theology**. This is the *emet* of *'hesed.* This the real theology of Hosea, Jeremiah, and II Isaiah, coming good **in Jesus**, **not** through the **false filter**, if I could so call it, of the **pagan lens**, that has become so dominant in later Christian readings. But that is **what** I think it's about, and **where** it's about.

Paul versus a post-Pauline interpretation

There are many texts in **Paul** where it is said that Jesus died for us, or even for our sins. There are references in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians and Titus. These texts occur at random in Paul, but the problem is the little word "**for".** He died **for** us. [24]

Most serious commentators in the Catholic tradition, over the years, would have said that Jesus did not suffer the anger of God, but that he willingly took on the crucifixion in order to atone for our sins. I don't think this is right, and the reason I don't think it's right is that **in no way is Jesus, according to Paul, a substitute for us**. When Paul says "he died **for** us", there are two possible Greek words he could write for "**for".** One is the Greek word *huper*, and the other is the Greek word *anti.* If Paul wanted to say Jesus died as a **substitute** for us, he would have written *anti.* Paul never wrote *anti.* In all of those texts, Paul wrote *huper,* which means Jesus died **out of love for us, <u>not</u>** in our place as a **substitute for us**. However, the niceties of the English language in particular are not nice enough to capture the difference, and it simply writes "**for** us", and, of course, if people already have an atonement paradigm in their minds, they are going to read it as a substitute.

When the atonement people refer to the Isaian text and these texts of Paul, they think they have an absolute case, but they don't.

The atonement approach would make sense for Greek and Roman readers, who have grown up in that sort of culture. Their literature is full of it. But this Greco-Roman culture cannot ever capture the mystery of Jesus' death, and the depth of his love for the little people of Galilee and Judea. This is a marvellous example of the transition from the Jewish world of the real Jesus – the real covenant and the real bible – into the Greek European and Roman world. And, whereas you've got to try and make the transition, because that's evangelization, the chance of complete success in capturing the full riches of the mystery is very low. I think we've got to develop some sort of Jewish feeling for it all, before we can really get it.

There are other texts in Paul that are worth mentioning, where the English translation of the word **reconciliation, reconciliation of all things in Christ,** and phrases like that, comes up. The word that Paul uses in his Greek, I would not be happy to translate as 'reconciliation'. I am really pushed to the wall in trying to come up with a better English word. The Greek is *katallassein. kata* = according; *allassein* = bringing together things in their otherness. If you write 'reconciliation', you are going to hear it in the atonement sense. If you write 'togethering it all' in its beautiful differences, it's clean of that. I think Paul was conscious of that and Paul knew his Greek.

I think Paul put it very well when he chose *katallassein.* I think it's a **creation** paradigm, not a redemption paradigm word. Paul never had an atonement mentality. His whole focus was on the creator, who holds all things in being all the time, not on a God, who had to be appeased. His God creates and respects difference and

[24] 'In the phrases we use about the meaning of Christ's death, it is the word 'for' that carries all the weight. Paul says simply, 'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' Rm 5,8, and quoting the earliest creed of the mother church in Jerusalem, he writes: 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures' I Cor 15,3. These little phrases, expressing Christ's dynamic, proactive love for us, express how christians spontaneously think of the value of Christ's death: Christ is for us precisely in our weakness and mortality; Christ is for us although (because?) we are sinners; Christ is for us as we resist him. The word 'for' tells us that Christ's regard for us is an impulsive, creative, recreative, generous self-gift that has no bounds – he 'empties himself' – to be with and for those who deserve little. ...'The Son of God loved me and delivered himself for me' Gal 2,20. 'Christ Jesus has made me his own' Phil 3,12.' Cf. J.McDade, supra.

otherness. To try to make everyone the same is violent. Paul's God, with utter gentleness, loves and accepts all creatures in their very otherness. God wants all creatures to live together, accepting and respecting each other's differences.

That's what I think is largely wrong with the whole concept of reconciliation, whether you talk about it in the aboriginal sense, or whether you talk about it in the intra-Church sense of rituals of reconciliation. Rites of reconciliation are essentially **communitarian re-gatherings of people**, and re-includings of people. They are not sorting things out individually, and paying off to God the debts or punishments due.

Mark versus the Greek-Roman culture.

There is one more text that I think does deserve a bit of comment. It's the only text in the Gospel literature that really is pertinent to the atonement theme or used by it. It's in Mark, and it really shows up the big difference between Mark and the Greco-Roman culture that is around Mark, I think in Rome, where at least the latter part of his writing probably would have occurred. What I am trying to say here is that the basic text is **Mark 10.45b.** I think the text is genuinely Mark all right. I'm not arguing about that. I'm pretty sure it's not an original saying of the historical Jesus. It's a make-up of Mark. What Mark has heard from the tradition is that Jesus said: "I did not come to be served but to serve". Now that could well be a Jesus historical statement. It is certainly way back in the ancient tradition. And Mark adds to it a kind of interpretative expansion-clause of his own. "I did not come to be served but to serve *and to give my life as ransom for the many"* as the English runs. I think that last bit is Mark's own interpretation of what Jesus was on about. However the English is terrible in "to give my life as ransom for the many". "To give" is actually a right translation, but what is translated as "my life" should be translated from the Greek as "my psyche". That's a very profound statement, when you think about it - not to give my time, my activity, but to give my very psyche – *psychen* in the Greek – my whole selfhood as, not ransom (*lutron* in Greek, *kofer* in Hebrew*)* – the word I would prefer is **'assurance' –** and 'for many' is really for the '*oi polloi* in Greek – the *rabbim* in Hebrew - in other words for the 'mob' – for the nameless multitude out there – this is not a pitch for interpersonal relationships, or one-on-one stuff, - this is large, unlimited multitudes – the mob.

Well, if you are prepared to give up the interests of your own individual psyche for the assurance of the large crowd out there, that's a pretty big ask, and that's Mark's interpretation of what Jesus was saying, when Jesus said: "I did not come to be served but to serve". I think this is the strongest statement in all Mark's gospel, and it's the closest he ever got to **a theology of ministry** – and his theology of ministry is an enormous ask.

Now there's a little catch in this, if you hear what that translation is suggesting. It's in the direction of "I love **you**, for **you**" not that "I substitute for you in atonement".

However, the Greek in Mark does use the preposition "*anti*" not *"huper"* for "for", but it needs to be read in the **outreach** sense, **not** the **substitutional** sense. Why?

A little after Mark, there were some communities that owed their origin to St. Paul – Paul would be already dead by then – who read Mark's text in the sense of substitution, and there was a reaction in the Christian community to that reading of Mark's text. The reaction comes in **1st Timothy** in the 2nd chapter, where it semi-quotes that phrase of Mark's and puts in *huper*, where Mark had written *anti* – in other words, the writer sets the interpretation correctly I think. That is the comment of Boismard. Unfortunately, the substitutional reading of Mark has allowed that reading to enter the tradition and dominate it.

So really, if people appeal to the Markan text, and say "Anyway, in St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus said that he came to substitute for us for the atonement of a multitude of human beings", you have to tell them that the text doesn't actually support that view. What it does support is the idea that Jesus, consciously in his adult life, was able to forego advantages to himself as an individual psyche, for the sake of giving assurance and support and solidarity to the mob out there. I think that's an inclusive **at-one-ment** model, **not a substitutive atonement** model.

It's very hard to put the differences in English, actually. **Atonement** is **like paying real money** for something, and the other notion, **at-one-ment,** is like achieving something **priceless**, but at the 'price' of a **love that is poured out for the people**. We are using "price" there metaphorically. It's like my earlier comment that the

whole trouble with all this material is **taking metaphors too literally**. Then you get yourself into a mess you can't get out of.

It may be that in some Hellenistic cults ***lutron*** had to do with the manumission of slaves. Or perhaps with the ransom of captives or prisoners. The superstition was that if money were not paid, there would be misfortunes from hidden sources, especially disease. The act of paying the lytron was a ritual act. It may be that these understandings coloured the reading of the Markan text.

Wherever in the later tradition, the **atonement mentality** started to emerge and develop, it **didn't come out of a well-understood reading of scripture**, and therefore it is resting on doubtful foundations. And that's fundamentally why we can't accept it.

The substance of this approach to the biblical texts was known 50 years ago, but it hasn't got through yet to the Christian public. And it hasn't got through, because, when the chips are down, those people pushing atonement are not going to be influenced by the texts, even the ones they use.

4. THE KEY MOTIFS OF REDEMPTION

We need to look at some key biblical themes related to the whole area of At-one-ment. The themes are:

4. Covenant
5. Redemption
6. Sacrifice
7. Expiation
8. Reconciliation

In almost every instance, there will be a meaning attached to the word, that isn't the obvious or ordinary meaning. So I wish I could say to you, "Look at, or hear these words, as if you had never come across them in your life before," because there is so much conditioning with the words, both in our ears and eyes and in our heads. If we could get behind that, it would be a lot easier.

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4. Covenant.

Let's start with **covenant,** because I think it is literally the foundation of all the others.

The word for covenant in Hebrew is *berith*, and basically in ancient times it means something like a treaty or a pact between various groups or clans or tribes or groups of whatever kind. But, I would like to pick it up, particularly in the fullness of meaning attached to it by the great prophets after the Exile. This is a Jeremiah or Ezekiel fullness of understanding of covenant, and in their vision it is basically an <u>accord.</u> That's the word I like most. It's living in accord together. That implies a very profound compatibility between the parties involved in the covenant, a sort of solidarity, which is like a solid form of belonging – a tangible, sensible, touchable, feelable belonging. And when we are talking about the **partners of the covenant**, we are talking about **God and Israel,** or God and humanity, or God and us people, and it really challenges the model of superior and inferior. Don't put God as superior all the time and us as inferior, and say that's the relationship, because that ends up inevitability in a **dependency**. What we are talking about is **partnership** in a covenant, with "partners" verging on **equality**, if I could dare to be that heretical. The **accord** is between God and the people, and the **compatibility** is between God and the people. That is one of the fundamental things, I think, whereas, in the other model, the assumption is that God and ourselves are not compatible.

In covenant, we are profoundly compatible, and the compatibility is a felt sort of **solidarity** – so that God sort of smells the way we smell, and we can smell God in our midst, like the smell of our own, if you can say it that way. It's that sort of thing.

One of the best ways I've ever found of trying to describe it a bit, is to say that what we've got is the nameless little people, who comprised the beginnings of Israel, the mix-um gatherum of God knows who, from God knows where, which is what Israel was really – a collection of nobodies. And think of God as the one you cannot name, because God transcends all language and all names. And there is an extraordinary **accord between the nameless ones and the unnameable One** – they kind of belong. And it's that sense, of how they kind of belong, that is the whole mystery of covenant for me. And I don't think this has been grasped very often.

I've tried to say sometimes that God and the left-out people of Israel belong to each other by native title, and that there is **not a legal title** to their belonging. The result is, that they do relate, within that belonging, on terms that I would dare to call equal terms. There is a sort of **lived equality between humans and God in covenant** – the result is that God treats humans as if they were divine persons, at least from a functional point of view, and we are allowed to treat God as if God were human like us – and that sort of relationship is extremely difficult to envisage, and it probably doesn't quite work except with **incarnation**, but the concept is earlier than incarnation, in Jeremiah.

The result of that bonding is that **we function together**, God and us, like **an active pact** for **mutual defence**, so God is committed to looking after us, and we are committed to looking after God, in that sense. And it's wholly **for defence**. It's for a co-adventure in history, so that history becomes the sort of trajectory that God and ourselves create together, for our own mutual benefit, and that is a very remarkable concept. And it changes the notion of Jewish history and Christian history, I would believe. It's not just that we are around, while things happen around us, but **we make things happen**, as the appropriate result of God and ourselves being that close together. Mind you, I don't think this has ever happened much. But it's just a lovely idea and ideal, if it ever worked out. But that is, above all, the nature of vision in prophets, and it's really a profound thing. It's like shaping a world to be a home for the **at-homeness of God with us**. And that's why, right through, in that prophetic literature, you get the sort of sub-theme of **a new creation** – and it really is like creating again – or creating, in a fullness, a kind of environment, where this can actually happen, and, just as in the original creation, it ends up with the **Sabbath.** This should end up in a Sabbath of God with humans, and humans with God – a Sabbath celebrated in Jubilee terms. It all comes out of the literature of **Isaiah.**

That's really the very deep notion of covenant, and it's not possible, I think, to have more than one covenant. We used to talk about the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, the Old Testament and the New Testament. I would be happy if that language dropped out. There is only the **one covenant,** eternally renewed, if you like. You can put it that way. I think it was fundamentally **a covenant of creation**, going back to the rainbow after the Flood with Noah, and it's essentially **inclusive of everybody**, because it <u>is</u> that. So it's quite wrong to equate covenant with contract, and it's quite wrong to equate covenant with community, in the public social forms that we've discovered as community. It is not that. But **covenant** is an extraordinary **mystery of grace**.

The word **communion** does go pretty close to it, I'll have to admit, if you hear it in an intensive sense at least. And even you get it in the **words of consecration** of the chalice – "This is the cup of my blood – the new and eternally renewed covenant." It is always new, and it always the same one. But it is **covenant thinking** that actually has to govern any discussion of any concepts, that would make up a new model. And where we talk about AT-ONE-MENT, it is the kind of AT-ONE-NESS that fits into the covenant, that we've been talking about. And if there is covenant, it is inviolable – it's the *emet* of *'hesed*, that is lived in covenant, and it's only in covenant that it is seriously possible.

You see, when the word "covenant" was translated into Greek, it was *diatheke*. Well that doesn't quite mean all of what we've been talking about. That's a **Greek concept** of a **negotiated, contracted, legal arrangement**, and I think you miss the point, when you slip into that. So it is really very difficult.

In more recent times, and very correctly, we've been talking about **marriage,** not as a contract, but as a covenant, and I don't know whether the people have heard the dimensions of the word "covenant", when they've applied it to marriage. It would be nice, if it were spelt out a little bit along those lines, because genuine marriage is like a symbol of the sacrament of that whole, larger notion of covenant. It is very fundamental to the whole construction of a **newness-with-God** model, or an **at-one-ness with God** model. The other thing is definitely contractual theology. This is **covenantal theology.** It is a different notion.

Recently I heard **Jonathan Sacks**, the chief rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth, speaking about **covenant**. He asked: How can we come together to do together what none of us can do alone? He said there were three ways

of doing it. One way is by using **power**, coercion, forcing you to do something. And that is **the historical way of politics**. Then there's **the market way**, the economics way of doing things, which is I **pay** you to do something for me. But neither of those actually link us in any bond of mutual care. So there's a third way, **the religious way**, which he calls **the way of covenant.**

Covenant, he claims, is what binds you to me, without my using power over you, or without my paying you. Covenant is that **bond of mutual responsibility**, of which one example is marriage, another example is parenthood. And once you build up from families to communities, to societies, and maybe to humanity as a whole, you have this ever-wider covenantal bond, and that's what he calls **the moral enterprise**, as understood by the Hebrew Bible.

Sacks also makes the point that **God** is **not patriarchal** at all. God is actually a Jewish mother, and he claims that anyone who has had a Jewish mother will know exactly what that means, - being concerned, solicitous, and so on. We sometimes talk of God as father. Isaiah called God **Father and Mother** as well, "Like one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you", says God. God is not male or female. God is the totality of all there is, and idolatry is worshipping a part instead of the whole.

This reminds me of the revelation of God to Moses as the God of RA'HAMIM. *Ra'hamim* really refers to that basic gut-level feeling, that wrenching of your inside, when you are literally moved and touched with feeling towards someone. The root of *ra'hamim* is *re'hem* that means the heart of a father and the womb of a mother. It has both masculine and feminine connotations together. It really means that whole, utter touchability, that is the humanity of a human heart. Moses learns from his encounter with God that the name of God is not transcendence but **tenderness.** What it really means is that God can be infinitely in touch with everyone, no matter where they are coming out of, or where they are going, or who they are. This infinite, unlimited in-touch-ness is RA'HAMIM. And this is the covenant God of the Jews.

The genius of Jewish faith, expressed by the Prophets, was the insight that their God is always **negotiable.** God is not limited by any one way of doing things, because God is not tied down to formulas. And so God is always open to negotiation. There is always a possibility of genuine **newness** with God. God can always do something different. Covenant implies the negotiability of all partners, especially God. If we really believed this, one of the consequences would be that we'd never again be afraid of God. We can only ever be radically afraid of someone who is not negotiable.

For the Jew, God is never the distant owner of the football club. God is part of the football team on the field. God is among the Jewish people. God shares their touch and feel and smell. God is one of them. That's what covenant is all about.

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5. Redemption

The next theme we need to have a look at is <u>Redemption.</u>

Again I wish we had never seen the word before. The word in Hebrew is *G'ullah* – no one has seen the word much before, yet it is a better word to look at. It's a profoundly **Semitic** notion – even a profoundly **Jewish** notion. And , could I say, it is a **secular** notion. Originally there were no religious connotations whatever. And it's talking about tribes in the ancient tribal period, and, as you know, tribes operate on an **honour and shame** paradigm. They want to protect the honour of the tribe and increase it. They want to avoid the shame of the tribe and get rid of it, and they never think in terms of individuals, the way we naturally do. **They think group-wise**, tribe-wise, in all that sense. That's why, in one sense, guilt has got very little to do with the ancient notion of redemption of the tribe. They didn't think in terms of guilt; they thought in terms of shame. It's a different way of approaching things altogether. Guilt belongs to individuals. They don't think like that.

Now what I want to say about this is connected with three terms:

1. **solidarity**, which is a covenant notion in the tribe;
2. **vindication**;
3. **celebration**.

We'll start with solidarity. A solidarity group is a **covenant group**. The covenant group has rights of **belonging** that are profound, and they have a sense of honour that is wonderful, and they definitely have no shame.

Now, supposing something bad happens to some members of a solidarity group, e.g. some of them might get captured by another tribe, or something like that, what happens is that the whole tribe rises up and vindicates the honour of the group, by going out and bringing these people back home, releasing them from capture. It is publicly, I suppose, the **vindication** of the honour of the tribe, and it's a big deal. And when they get home they have a huge **celebration**, to celebrate how good they were for doing that, and the celebration feeds right into the **solidarity.** So you have a very virtuous circle, that really **increases the dynamics** of the strength of the whole operation all the time, and that's the sort of group we're talking about.

Now let me throw in an **example** or two. Do you remember about at least 30 years ago, there was a group of Jews, who were captured in Africa, in a place called Entebbe, and the United Nations had a meeting and sat down and thought about what they might do – and while they were still thinking about it, the Israeli air-force took off for Entebbe, grabbed these people, flew back home with them, and had a huge celebration. That's exactly **vindication.** And this sort of thing is still happening at the moment in Israel. This is one of the problems between the **Jews** and the **Arabs**. They are **solidarity groups** with covenant notions, so if one of them throws a petrol bomb and kills three Israelis, they have to go and kill three Arabs to vindicate the honour of Israel. That is why, basically, the western diplomats can't understand it. It's **ancient Semitic, solidarity, covenant culture** in practice, that demands vindication.

You know that text in Genesis, where Cain killed Abel – "the blood of Abel was crying out to Heaven," **not** for "**vengeance**", which is a terrible English translation, but for "**vindication**" – *g'ullah*. This is the word for vindication, and the person who performs the *g'ullah* is the *goel*. And then they'd have a huge party.

A New Testament example can be found in the story of the Lost Sheep. We read this too much in a modern context – shepherd goes, out of compassion, and finds the lost sheep – No way! The **honour** of the whole sheepfold was at stake, so one of the people, who belonged to the whole flock, had to go out and bring back in, for the honour of the flock, the one that had disappeared. That's why "I know my sheep and my sheep know me". It's **covenant-belonging** in the whole deal.

Well, the real issue is, that by some unfortunate accident of translation, ***g'ullah,*** which means "**vindication**", was **translated as "redemption**". It's got nothing to do with the modern English ideas we connect around "redemption". It is a very powerful ancient Semitic notion of **re-inclusion** of those who've been excluded. It is a vindication process. You see, in the ancient days, basically there were two big issues, viz. **blood and land.** Blood meant the murder or capture of somebody. So if they murdered three of yours, you'd murder three of theirs to restore the balance of the tribes. If they imprisoned three of yours, you'd imprison three of theirs. It was that kind of deal. If they stole some of our land, we'd steal some of their land, to make the thing look right again. And it was really a function of a practical balance of the clans, which was good for everybody, if you grasped it that way. At some stage they used to do this through an **exchange of money**, but that's later on, and the exchange of money that righted things like that was called a *kofer*. I suspect *kofer* is behind the English expression "in our coffers" – it's the same idea, if not the same word, literally. It's not paying money to atone for something. It's actually achieving the strength of the group again, by positive actions, and that's called redeeming.

You get those texts again in II Isaiah: "Do not be afraid. I will redeem you. Do not be afraid. I will vindicate you, if you are in trouble, says your God, your vindicator, (which is your redeemer.)"

You have a similar text in Job… "I know that my redeemer liveth. And even beyond death, my redeemer liveth." There is vindication, even after death. And death cannot even knock the strength of this group, of this covenant.

After the Exile, the Jews looked at redemption slightly differently, because they are back from the exile, and they are saying "the exile must never happen to us again" – so what we **need** are **good political leaders** who will avoid the structural malaise of the whole system and create a strength that other nations will not be able to weaken.

These new political leaders were called *goellim* or **redeemers** – and they were there to vindicate Israel in this new political and historical situation. This is still a completely **secular** notion. It's active politics. Now, it's only

when you get to II Isaiah, that you actually **spiritualise** the notion of redemption. It doesn't happen before that, and II Isaiah does not speak of "atonement for sin" but of the fact that **God will always be the vindicator**, and if God's servant gets into trouble by human accident, God will be there and make good come out of the trouble, even if the trouble is death.

So when you get to **Jesus in the New Testament**, they tend to apply the spiritualised notion of redeemer to Jesus – but it happens in a kind of **trinitarian model**. You can almost say that, in the New Testament vision, we've got three redeemers – there's Jesus, there's God the Father, and there's the Holy Spirit. And what **Jesus** does, is **identify with the peasants in Galilee**, and implicitly with marginal people everywhere, because they've been put down, and their rights have been trampled upon, and **Jesus** says: "I will **vindicate** your **rights in justice**", and he becomes their **vindicator**, their *goel*. He claims them as his own, and when Jesus does that, by his own tears and by his blood, **God the Father** rises up and says: "Well, I'm your **vindicator** too – and I will protect you, because you are my very own", and in that case, God is also the vindicator and the redeemer. And then, when Jesus and God have done that, they breathe this Holy Spirit of **new energy** into the people, and include them into their own energy, and transform them and transfigure them as a result, and the **Spirit** given them is also a **redeemer**. And of course the unity of God is the unity of those three redeemers – Jesus, God the Father and the Holy Spirit. We don't **do** things to atone for our sins. Father, Son and Spirit are our **vindicators.**

I know I'm talking here about notions of redemption that most people do not connect with the word "redemption", and that's one of the trouble, isn't it? Most people think of paying a price to someone to buy someone back. Most people think of us atoning for our sins to God to make up for our sins. The price isn't money. **The price** is **doing things that are hard**, and taking on sufferings and things like that. This is a totally different model – a model we were at in the previous lectures.

So, in many ways, I'd like to drop the word "redemption" entirely, because I don't think it is redeemable, in present English listening anyway. I would like to use a word like "**inclusion**", or something like that. It's a more **belonging** word, than a make-up-from-a-distance word. It puts a different pattern in front of us, as the way we are supposed to think. But we're stuck, I think, with the word "redemption". It's been around too long to kick out of the window fast, but if I knew how, I would.

[Redemptorists will have to become "the holy includers"! – in the covenant of the wholly integrated Includer!]

There is something in the language, that is running counter to the meaning we want to convey by using the word. Again this is not the model we were at earlier, but it is very much **a covenant model**.

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6. Sacrifice

Let's look at the third theme, <u>sacrifice</u>.

Now sacrifice is an ungodly thing, if I might say so. There's been theology of sacrifice around for ever and ever; but it is so messed up that, even more than redemption, you could wish that nobody had ever heard of the word and we could drop it for something else. But it's there. It's been part of out Eucharistic liturgy and language for nearly 2000 years, and though the concept of sacrifice was extremely positive in its Jewish context, it has acquired quite negative overtones, especially during the second millennium.

It's also doubly difficult, because the current culture we live in is consumerist, and a consumerist culture is exactly the opposite of a sacrifice culture. So it is hard to sell this positive sacrifice culture these days. But let's try.

The way I like to work on it is that there are two understandings of sacrifice, one pagan, and one Jewish. I like to call the **pagan** understanding a **destructive** one, and the **Jewish** understanding a **constructive** one.

<u>A. The pagan model.</u>

Now the pagan one is historically (much) earlier – but still alive and well. **Sacrifice** grows up **originally** in **pagan groups** and in pagan environments. Sacrifice does not naturally fit with the Jewish faith. The **Jews** picked

up practices from their pagan neighbours and then tried to give them **a more positive interpretation** - I don't think ever with complete success. But that's the way it goes.

Let's start with the pagan **destructive** notion. Now, the assumption behind it is that:

their god is a **distant** god, not close to them;
their god is an **offended** god – (offended by them);
their god is **unwilling to forgive them** – so their god has to be cajoled into forgiving them.

Now how do you do that? Well, the assumption also is that their god has every right to kill the people because they deserve to be wiped out and annihilated, for what they did. But they come to an arrangement with their god, that their god won't annihilate them, if they come up with a ritual that will satisfy their god's needs. And the ritual is, that you take hold of an animal and you extend your hands over it and you identify with it. That's a gesture of **identification** between the people and the animal. And then you do to the animal what the god is entitled to do to you. And the god calls it quits. The god's needs - the god's anger and need for legitimate violence - are satisfied, by the god's doing-in the animal, instead of doing-in the whole people. By the way, **this assumes an extraordinarily angry and violent kind of god**, doesn't it? But this is pure paganism, that I'm trying to talk about.

Pagan sacrifice happens in three steps:

1. You kill the animal, in the name of your god, and that's symbolically killing the whole people.
2. Then, having killed the animal, you burn it to a cinder, like a holocaust, and that again is symbolically annihilating the whole people in the name of the god.
3. And, if there is anything left, you have a BBQ and you consume the lot to get rid of absolutely every bit of flesh that was left, and that's removing the whole material part of the animal. That is symbolically removing the entire people, and equivalently making the god satisfied.

Now, I think you'll find that you'll recognize that notion of sacrifice. I think that's the one that's been operative in most, if not all, of our theology of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. And this is why we do him in, in such a barbarous way through crucifixion. And this is applied to the sacrifice of the Mass, and this is applied to the spiritual sacrifice of our own selves in the spiritual life, kind of stuff. It's that model.

I don't want to keep harping on it, but I think it is paganism. It always was paganism. And that's why I think there is a **different model of sacrifice.**

B. The Jewish model

The different model is a **Jewish** one.

We need to focus on the **Jewish context** of sacrifice and on **rituals** that are **unbloody**. Despite failures in practice and in some forms of interpretation, there is present **in the core mystery of Israel** something that is not only **open** to the **more positive** mystery of sacrifice, but that **transforms** even the practice of bloody sacrifice. With **Jesus**, there was a change in the idea of sacrifice, but this **continued a change** that had **already** been **present** in the ancient times of Israel.

The Jews originally had no need for sacrifice, because **their god** was so **close** to them always, and so **on side** with them always, and so **positive** to them always. You remember that text: "No other nation has its gods as close to it as our god is to us." This expresses profoundly the **whole genius of Israel**, who, as a people, believed in **covenant**. Their God was bound to them in the covenant bond. They lived always with a keen sense of their living and **immediate access to God**. Even when they broke the covenant rules, their God never abandoned the covenant relationship with them. They didn't need to cajole God into being present to them or forgiving them. This was assumed as given already and permanently. They always had the right and privilege of access to their God, who would look after them. It is this **faith** that changed the meaning and **interpretation** of what they did, when they copied the externals of the bloody sacrificial rituals of their gentile neighbours.

So if you asked the Jews-of-old: "Why do you want rituals?" They'd say: "We don't, if we believe in a God like that, but **the neighbours** have rituals, so we have to keep up with the neighbours. So we've decided to copy some of the things the neighbours do, and **twist the interpretation** to fit our own set of beliefs and the way we act

everything out. So let's do that, and make each one of the pagan rituals, that we take over, **express our kind of relationship with God**, and our nearness to God, and the closeness of God to us. So let's get hold of an animal, a bull or a lamb or whatever. Now we'll put our hands on the animal and, as a people, symbolically identify with the animal."

Now this is where the action starts. The **pagans** would say: "Kill it" because **<u>their</u> god kills the people**. The **Jews** say: "No, no! God doesn't do that. What we'll do is get the blood out of the animal, and then we'll use the blood in a ritual to express our nearness to God." You might argue that it's hard to get blood out of an animal without killing it. Well, that's bad luck for the animal. But if they had known how to get the blood without killing the animal , they probably would have done it that way. They were **not into violence**, especially with animals.

So the Jews do slit the throat of the animal, and they do put the blood in a bowl. Now the **blood** was considered to contain the **life** of the animal, and so to be **sacred** – that's what they used to think in the old days – that the life was in the blood – the blood was, as it were, **alive** – and that stands symbolically for the life in the whole people. So, they take this blood, standing for the life of the whole people, and they take it to a place where God is specially considered to be – the Temple, the Holy of Holies, the place of the presence, above the Ark of the Covenant, the altar – and they sprinkled it at the place of the presence or poured it on the altar. And that gesture says: **the life of the people**, symbolized by the life in this blood, **and the life of God** present here, touch one another and they are **one life**. It's a covenant symbolism, and it expresses a **symbiosis** between God and the people. In this way they were renewing the covenant that bonded God's life and their life into one. And it's got a very different signification from the pagan signification of doing materially much the same thing. It is **not annihilating a life**, because a bad god wants it to be. It's expressing the **unity of one life with another** – the people's life and God's life. And that is a remarkably beautiful gesture and ritual. Can you see the difference?

Well, then they said, "We've got a carcass left on our hands. What are we going to do with it?" They said the pagans would set it on fire and have a holocaust. So the Jews said: "Well, let's do that." But having a holocaust was not going to burn it out of existence. It was going to convert it into **smoke**. You might say that, that is a fairly subtle distinction, but there was a real point in it. The smoke, in the Jewish mind, was **holy**, because it had the power to rise up in little puffs, up to heaven, where God was, so if you could **convert this whole animal into smoke**, you converted it into a prayer that lifted up and touched God. And again it's **a symbol of unification** of our life and God's – **not** a symbol of **annihilation** or destruction or separation. It's a beautiful idea.

You know this has **liturgical ramifications**. In the *tamid* sacrifice in the Temple, they used to do this with incense in the evening prayer, and it was like "Let my prayer rise up like incense before you." They used to put a little prayer of petition on each puff of the smoke, and so go up to God that way.

That was the basis of Vespers or Evening Prayer in the Church, until people said: "Well, it's a bit messy lighting fires, so let's leave all that out, and say some prayers instead." That was really the roots of all that.

And the **third** bit – not only to get the blood instead of killing, and to turn it into smoke instead of burning to a cinder, - if you had anything left that was edible, you didn't eat it in order to get rid of it. You ate it in order to have a **communion meal** with your God, who would sit there banqueting with you. The Jews believed that they as God's people and God ate together in the same meal, because they shared the same covenant life, which again was a beautiful idea. In **Hebrew history**, **communion or thanksgiving** is **earliest** form of sacrifice, earlier than holocausts. Expiatory sacrifice emerges after the Exile. After some time, holocausts took on an expiatory meaning.

There was **never** a question of **inflicting suffering**, but of expressing **union with God**. Destroying the victim (called **immolation**) was **not essential** to sacrifice at all, and was not done by the offerer but by the priest 'butcher'. The **Hebrew God** was **against** anything **destructive**. The point of the sacrifice was not death. It was **a ritual of redistribution** of the body of the animal. Among those who ate it, there were set up **new lines of kinship**, that created new 'family' relations. This was for **men only**. **Women** entered the kinship relationship through the **blood of childbirth**.

All these changes, in interpreting the symbols of the bloody sacrifice, go as far as possible towards **a real change in** the **meaning** of the sacrifice itself.

But can you see that that notion of sacrifice is very **germane to Jewish belief**, with that nearness of God, with the covenant thing, and with the assurance of God's vindication, no matter what you did? I think this is a far better notion of sacrifice itself. Can you hear the difference?

One of the sad things, I believe, is that, when we've done our theology and catechesis, we haven't actually used that Jewish notion of sacrifice much - we haven't used it as an interpretation of how we **could** say that what happened at Calvary was a sacrifice. And we haven't used it to interpret the Eucharist. If we did, it would come out in a healthier and cleaner kind of way than the other way. But the other notion of sacrifice is in people's bloodstream imaginatively, and that's what we're fighting against.

That's why I said earlier that, no matter how often you try to explain how wrong is the atonement model, every time people go to Mass, they are going to think that an atonement sacrifice is taking place, - a sacrifice, yes, but **not** an atonement sacrifice in that sense.

So I think, what Jesus does, is offer to God his own blood, as the living expression of the life of all his own people, and it is literally sprinkled, if you like, at the door posts of God, and it shows the oneness of God, with all of that life, and that oneness expresses itself in resurrection. It is a much more powerful idea.

Regarding the **Eucharist**, really I think we've vastly overdone the notion that by having separate consecrations of the bread and wine we have a symbolic killing of Jesus in the Eucharist. This is **not** what Eucharist is about – it's a symbolic re-enacting of what Jesus did, in offering his very life for us, **out of love for us**, **not in substitution for us**, to the God, who is always with us, and in union with us, in a living kind of a way. I think that would be a vast improvement. That's an **at-one-ment** model of sacrifice.

Sacrifice: its language

I've mentioned that it is very hard to convince many Catholics that sacrifice can be a positive celebration of praise and thanks for the loving kindness of our God. The **need** to sacrifice **to make amends** to God seems to be in our very bloodstream. Why?

It is said that communities with a large sense of **non-negotiated guilt** tend to practise sacrifice. The collective unconscious would seem to prefer to do sacrificial acts, rather than look at the guilt and do something about it. The **roots of violence** could lie here. Violence implies action without persons being consciously aware of why they act.

A living **victim**, like an animal, is offered to the deity. It passes over to the exclusive domain of the god and so is made "**sacred**". It then becomes legitimate for society to treat the animal as a victim. An office, like **priesthood**, is then socially instituted to perform the ritual sacrifice. **Sacrifice** is in this way **institutionalised,** and a sanctioned form of **violence** to the victim is **ritually justified**.

People use the language of sacrifice **metaphorically.** We speak today of the way capitalism 'sacrifices' lower-income earners to the interests of the propertied class, for the sake of progress.

We speak of the way Nazism 'sacrificed' the Jewish people, for the sake of the myth of racial purity.

We speak of the way many people become self-effacing victims, who sacrifice themselves for those they love, or for those to whom they have commitments, as in family life.

A certain spiritual language applauds the idea of 'self-immolation', of presenting oneself as a willing? Victim, by sacrificing self-interest for the sake of altruism. The advent of feminism has highlighted the way women were abused when such a mentality was glorified.

Sacrifice: historical framework

There are three dominant historical frameworks for sacrifice as legitimised violent victimisation – two Christian, one Jewish.

1. Christian – 19th-20th centuries

The first framework is a certain stream of Catholic theology of the past one hundred years and more, that comes from the **spirituality** of the **French Oratory**. It was a spirituality of **self-emptying** or self-annihilation for the sake of others. It was the climax of a peculiarly French reaction to the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Entire theologies of Jesus, redemption and Eucharist have been built on it. Roman Catholicism strongly emphasised Eucharistic sacrifice.

Flowing from the Council of Trent in 16th century, a **strong sacrificial imagery** confirmed an exclusively **male and celibate priesthood**, and left **women and children** in a relatively **subordinate** role. In this framework, there was insistence that the **Eucharist** was a true **sacrifice**, that **of Christ on Calvary**, and **not** simply **a meal**, and that the Last Supper should be studied without being located in the context of the ongoing meals of Jesus.

2. Christian from 4th century

The second framework comes from the Christian 4th century. At that time there were some **ego-weak males** who, in developing their devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, were expressing a **desire for their mother**, i.e. for an identification with the feminine. They unconsciously repressed these desires, and unconscious conflict resulted. They wanted to identify with the **Blessed Virgin Mary**, and at the same time become sacrificing priests. They wanted to perform a ritual, designed to subordinate and eliminate women from positions of significance in the community, whilst giving the supreme place of honour in the Church to Mary. To cope with this incongruent situation, these males punished themselves by attempting self-emasculation, from which emerged **celibacy**. The male sacrificers were forbidden access to women to avoid any violence towards them. They also lived ascetical lives of spiritual sacrifice.

Studies have revealed that many of these **men** came from **father-ineffective families**, and from a relatively **low status in society**, viz. from the 'proletariat'. It is suggested that these men created **a 'bourgeois' social Christianity** in which the patterns of **patriarchy** became hardened. Unwittingly they set up a situation for themselves, in which social and internal **conflict** existed.

The **social conflict** was between their real 'proletariat' character and the 'bourgeois' system, that they'd made for themselves. They hoped to find in this higher level of society a **prestige** to which they were not naturally accustomed.

The **internal conflict** was between their claim to be **priests,** and their duty to be **victims**, who lived lives of spiritual sacrifice. They resolved the conflict by synthesizing the priesthood and victimhood of Christ in the Eucharist. If Christ was simultaneously priest and victim, then they, his ministers, could be the same.

This meant they were adopting what psychologically could be **a paranoid position**. It demanded submission to the bourgeois patriarchy of the ecclesiastical establishment in the name of imitation of Christ and devotion to Mother Church.

3. Jewish framework

The third framework is Jewish. According to the Jewish scholar, **J. Levenson**, though people have assumed there were no 'pagan' approaches to sacrifice among the Jewish people in ancient times, it now seems that **human and child sacrifices**, especially the ritual killing of a **first born son**, were historically conducted in Israel, and the impulse to do them never died out. Levenson has shown that the **binding of Isaac** is modelled on these things, and that the **notion of Passover** itself depends on the theories of sacrifice implied in them. We know that Israel transformed the pagan idea of human sacrifice, by redeeming or **saving the intended victim**, by substituting an alternative victim(such as an animal). This resulted in a focus on religious identity as a '**spared victim'**. This becomes the 'supreme paradigm of religious life' in Jewish and subsequently Christian tradition. To be a person is to be at best a rescued Isaac. Hence people feel guilty and want to make atonement to the victim who substituted for them.

Much of the **language of sacrifice** used **today** comes, without our knowing it, from the meaning of this word, in each of these three historical situations which still affect us.

Sacrifice: various negative theories

Psychoanalyst, W. Beers, sees the **male**, firstly as a child, and later as an adult, **threatened** by his difference in identity from his mother. In later life, he fears being engulfed **by the feminine**, which is a danger to his self-esteem, integrity and capacity to act. Hence, some unintegrated males can fear, control, degrade and even abuse women. They are **trapped** in their own **Narcissism**, and experience profound **conflict**.

Beers extends this model to **ritual sacrifice**. Men, not women, perform this ritual. He sees the male investment in sacrificial rituals as an example of their strong desire to separate from mothers, women and ideals. The anxiety of the male is so deep that men, in the classic example of sacrifice, tend to negate their own gender by **sacrificing** their **firstborn sons**. This results in the sacrificial model of '**negated identity'**. The male act of performing sacrifice runs the risk of the extinction of the male altogether, through the murder of the firstborn.

In all these critical theories of sacrifice, there is a **common thread**. It is a particular notion of the human person. This notion is Narcissistic, self-punishing, closed to relationship with others and with God, even with itself. There is an individualism here which opens the way to **a non-relational view of life.** Historically, this has led to extreme separation of church and state, to the triumph of the technological and to the elevation of **economics** (not kinship or even politics) as the focus of social institutions. The whole overall approach to sacrifice is depressive in the face of an excessive **negativity in human life**. There are real links between this view of person and some telling analyses of human culture**. Jesus** has often been **made** the **carrier of** all these **negative notions of sacrifice**, all of which shows how much an alternative approach to sacrifice is needed.

Sacrifice: a positive theory

A positive approach to sacrifice is rooted in '**gift-giving'**. The Latin word, *sacrificere*, means to make sacred or holy, and there is something sacred about the process of gift-giving. It is not a thing but a person who gives and is given. In giving a gift, we give ourselves as givers to the other. The act of giving does not imply alienation but **overture**. One transfers one's very self to the enjoyed delight of the self and the other.

Gift-giving implies a giving and a thanks-giving. There is pure joy and a sense of sacredness. This is a sacrificial act in the sense of enacting something very sacred. There is nothing negative or destructive here. The focus is on positive persons, positively interacting. This interpersonal communication is a holy mystery.

The act of offering a gift is an act of ***agape***, not *eros.*
Agape suggests love in the sense of altruism, generosity, kindly concern, devotedness.
Eros suggests narcissism, more self-interest in sexual, earthy love.
Agape goes beyond desire and opens up a mysterious access between person and person.

This is much more true when a human person makes **a gift to God**. A divine person can infinitely be present to the offerer, receive and welcome the offerer, and reciprocate with the infinity of the divine self to the giver. A divine person enjoys the event, longs for it, and is always in the posture of someone accessible and available for its happening.

This **positive vision of sacrifice** does **not sit well** with rituals that involve the **killing** of a living being. The vision of priesthood does not sit very congruently with identifying the **priest as a butcher**. **Asian cultures** have a much **gentler** approach with their offerings of rice or barley cakes, flowers and fruit. It stems from the attitude of **non-injury** or non-violence which suggests, in the domain of ritual sacrifice, a **higher level of civilization** than that yet achieved in the West.

In both ancient Jewish and Greek cultures there were rituals of sacrifice other than those known as 'expiatory' – they were called **sacrifices of celebration and festivity.** In some ways they share something of the **higher gentleness** of the Asian world.

Sacrifice is meant to be a **joyful** expression of union with God. It is a **gift** from us to the **God**, who is **always present** , and is a **communion** granted to us by that same God. The **thanksgiving** element is primary. It thanks for life in God. **Blood** is the locus. It is the sign of **life**. So blood us used in sacrifice because it is **dynamic**, **vivifying**. It is a feast - a song of love – an exceptional wine. There is a profound **joy** in mutual recognition. The whole point of it is **love**, that comes from holy desire and is achieved in **delight**, in the **drawing by God** that makes this possible. This results in an **incorporation** into the people of God, and into the **communional will** of both the God and the people together.

4. **Expiation**

Let's turn now to Expiation, where the point gets unfortunately incredibly clear. How there are two notions of expiation, one pagan and one Jewish

A. Pagan notion of expiation

In the **pagan** notion of expiation, you've got a people that recognizes it has done something wrong by its god, and wants to make up for it. So it does something to atone for or expiate its wrong-doing. The **subject** of the verb in the doing-something is **the people**, who did wrong, viz. us. The **beneficiary** of the action is **god**, who is made up to, and the purpose of it all is to persuade god to forgive us. This view is still very prevalent in the catholic church.

B. Jewish notion of expiation

The **Jewish** notion of expiation is completely different. First of all, why would you need it, if your god is so much with you? – good point!- but you've got to copy the neighbours, so you give it a go. But in the Jewish transposition of what the pagan neighbours did, the **subject** of the verb is **god**, not us, and the **beneficiary** is **us**, not god, and the **purpose** of it all, and the **meaning** of it all, is that it is to **cleanse us**. God cleanses us and makes us beautiful again, and it's a very different notion. You see, the word that is used for "expiation" in Hebrew is *kipper*.

The word ***kipper*** linguistically means to cover or recover something, to repair a hole, to cure a sickness, to mend a rift, to make good a torn or broken covering. The **object** of the verb in ancient times was **not** a person or a sin, but **a place** or a thing thought to be contaminated and **in need of cleansing**. The high priest in the Temple symbolised and stood for God. What the high priest did was considered to be actually done by God.

1. The **Lord** was believed to be purifying and **cleansing the cosmos**, as the high priest cleansed and purified the temple by sprinkling it with blood, and pouring blood, i.e. life, on its significant places.
2. Having cleansed the Temple, the **high priest absorbed the negative effects** of the failings of the people by **eating the flesh** of the victim, which symbolically represented the contaminated people: he assimilated them and took them into himself. The mythic understanding was that God was prepared to do exactly what the high priest had done.
3. The priest then transferred the iniquity he had taken upon himself to the goat, called the **scapegoat**. (This was not the animal who'd been slain.) He did this by laying his hands on the goat. He then the banished the scapegoat, that bore the iniquity, and thus removed both the goat and the contamination from the people.

We know the words ***yom kippur***, (a derivative of *kipper*). It means in English the day of expiation or the **day of atonement**. *Kipper* is the verb, and God is the subject of the verb. We are the beneficiaries. This is expressed in the beautiful way the Hebrews have.

Let's link this to the **sacrifice** idea. Earlier we were talking about the **blood** in the sacrifice. The blood contains the **life** of the animal. The life was in the blood. The blood was a very special juice, as the Rabbis used to say.

But the blood was more than that. The Jews regarded the **blood as cleansing fluid**, like the fluid with which you'd clean a window. God took hold of the cleansing fluid offered to God, as it were on a rag, and God smeared it across the people – that was called *kipper*, not expiation. It was a beautiful, **gracious cleansing deed of God** – not a tentative thing the people did to persuade God to be decent – a very different concept.

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world", who **smears out the stains** of the people, you could say. It is exactly the same idea. I think it is a very beautiful notion. And all these notions are very congruent. They fit together and they are all on a **covenant** assumption or an **at-one-ment** set of assumptions.

It is a pity that the ancient Hebrew word *kipper* has been translated into English as 'atone' or 'expiate'. It makes one think that the subject of the verb was the human person who has sinned, and not the Lord, working through the high priest. It also causes us to think that the object of the whole exercise was to appease the divine anger. Whereas *kipper* is all about cleansing humanity, and removing iniquity and its traces, from the human world. The result is that the thematics of cleansing (*kipper*) have been changed into those **expiation**, and the **negative, destructive theories of sacrifice** have been established.

Logically, we would want to see the mindset of this **theology of access and positivity in the gift-offering of sacrifice**, extended to the situation of unbloody sacrifice, especially to that of the **family meal**. Historically this did not happen in Israel, at least in times prior to Jesus. Sociologist, Bruce Malina suggests that **domestic sacrifice** was virtually **eliminated** and all recognized forms of **sacrifice became public** and **political**. There is no evidence that the extension of the constructive theory of sacrifice to the meal has actually occurred.

Links with theologies of Eucharist

Sadly this positive notion of sacrifice has been lost in approaches to the Eucharist. The original meaning of the meals of Jesus and their special sacrificial dimensions have been obscured. Vatican II tried to revive them, but latterly those efforts have been discounted.

Three tendencies have led to this loss:

1. Emphasis was given to the **separate rituals** for the **bread** and the **cup** at Mass. People saw the separation of body from blood as a **symbol of death**. Though this interpretation was not present in the earliest biblical texts, its presence in the liturgical tradition has opened the door to **destruction theories of sacrifice** as applied to the Eucharist and closed the door to any understanding of the Mass as a meal.
2. The **Western** church, in contrast with the Eastern church, placed all its emphasis in the Mass on the **words of consecration**, which were seen to contain dimensions of sacrifice. The **Eastern** prominence given to the **role of the Holy Spirit** in the Eucharist was **minimised**. This removed the congruence of seeing the rite in any sense as a meal. A meal is not primarily a formula of sacred words.
3. The third tendency was to focus on the **real presence of Jesus** as an objective reality. This was seen as more important than what the whole ritual and its symbols signified. Again the **primacy of the meal** and the **positive notion of sacrifice** was **lost.**

The basic problem with all these tendencies is that the divine action – the **coming of the Kingdom** – is **not** included nor given sufficient **prominence** in the Eucharistic event. By focussing on the double ritual and the real presence of the risen Jesus, people have forgotten the most important dimension of all: the actual **coming of the God of the poor**. Something is lost to the theological synthesis, and something is lost to the historical reality of what Jesus did.

5.Reconciliation

And when you get to reconciliation, it is not what we nowadays call or think of as reconciliation. It is really a **togethering** of all of us in that given **positivity of God**, and that is different.

The best description of it, that I've found, is in **II Corinthians** from **Paul** himself, who got hold of all this beautifully. In chapter 5, he says something like:
"from now on, we regard no one from a human view, or the way we used to look at them – but if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation – and is created in a new way. The old has passed away, the new has come."

What he means by "the old" is the world of division and separation, where things are not united as they should be – say, in our terms: racial discrimination, violence, competition, abuse, elimination of those we don't want – <u>that</u> world – a world, living with an anxiety that it is divided from a distant god.

Now, Paul says that the old view of the world is passed away; the new is come – and the new is a world, where God says: "I'm with you; I claim you; I own you; I care for you; I love you; I protect you; I include you into my life; I live my life with you. You live your life with me." It's a world of **communion** and **relationship**. It's a world that cannot tolerate divisions and separation, and the word that Paul uses for getting into a world like that is "**to get persons together**" – *katalassein* in Greek – as we saw earlier. I like translating it as the verb "to together in God".

In chapter 5, 17-21, Paul says: "All this is from God, who through Christ has togethered us to himself, and given to us the ministry of togethering – that is, God was in Christ, togethering the universe to the Godself, not counting trespasses against anyone, and entrusting to us the message of togethering. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making God's appeal through us. We beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be togethered with God."

I think that says it so clearly for me, that you don't need to say it in any other way.

But that notion of **togethering** has been translated classically by "reconciliation". I think it misses the point by a mile. It is not a restoration of individual relationship – it is rather a cosmic bringing together of all there is. I think a better translation would have yielded a better result, frankly.

In all this, I often feel that I keep saying to you: "Translators have done a terrible job!" – and I believe they actually have – we can't get past that, and I think it is only the patience of a lot of the modern scholars, who have slowly done their Greek at home, and line by line have shown us that we have suffered from bad translations.

For example, there is a classic one in the "Song of Songs", where the Hebrew reads: "I am black and beautiful". St Jerome has translated this as " I am black <u>but</u> beautiful!" There was more going on in Jerome than a good knowledge of languages!
But this is what has happened so many times through so many instances.

There is another classic line, that I've discovered myself only in the past decade, through good Greek scholars, in Luke's Annunciation text. "Be it done to me according to you word" says Mary. *Fiat* in Latin. She never said a word of that. If Luke had meant that, Luke would have used a different variant of the verb, than he actually used in he text. He used *genoito*, which is an intensive optative form of the verb. What Mary is saying, is: "I certainly agree! What a marvellous idea! Let's go!" Well, you can't get away with that today in our churches.

There would be an enormous difference in, say, the spirituality of women if the translation had been right.

<u>A comment</u>. The translation reflects a world view at the time. It is possible to make a translation suit a particular view you wish to impose. It is a real manipulation of a text for a political reason.

And that's what has happened all along the track. You see "**covenant**" got a wrong translation, really. So did "**redemption**" and "**expiation".** Although **"sacrifice**" has probably got the verbally correct translation, the meaning has not been right.

And right through, you are in a series of things that shouldn't have been that way. But they were, and they are in our blood stream.

If you want to put an alternative model, I would think the correctly read and translated concepts there, are the basis for what you'd be trying to do.

5. THE SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER OF REDEMPTION

We have seen that sacrifice is central among the motifs of redemption. I would like now to explore it in more detail.

Sacrifice : its language.

In the ancient world, sacrifice was practised long before there were any attempts to define it. It came from an instinctive cultural impulse, rather than from clearly thought-out ideas. All peoples in the ancient world – Jews, Gentiles-pagans – made offerings, they did so with blood, they had to be pure to do so. The situation has not changed much in the modern (cultural or religious) world. Outside theology, people spontaneously think of sacrifice as indicating outstanding acts of altruism, such as patriotic death, in which some heroically 'sacrifice'

their lives for others. In theology, the governing models of sacrifice are the 'sacrifice of Isaac', the 'sacrifice of Calvary', or the 'sacrifice of the Mass'.

It is clear that there is an ambivalence in the very word 'sacrifice'. It names something we do not particularly want to be clear about. Many different things are called sacrifice. The term includes rituals that are done in a mood of festivity, fellowship and celebration, and rituals that are done in a mood of immolation, expiation, and destruction. In some cultures there is distinction between familial (or domestic) rituals of sacrifice, and public (or political) rituals of sacrifice. In christian theology, the immolative and public rituals seem to have governed the unfolding of the theme of sacrifice. It is on them that this inquiry will focus.

The roots of the English word, sacrifice, come from the Latin, sacrum facere, to do something sacred. Yet, what appears to be done does not appear to be sacred : it appears to be violent. The very language looks like an attempt to justify and soften the violence, by creating for it a peculiar form of rhetoric and logic. There, sacrifice is a euphemism, and focusses less on what is done, than on the motive for which it is done, and on the results expected from what is done. The motive is that of making an offering to a superior (divine) being, to induce that being to intervene on behalf of the offerer, or those who are important to the offerer. The desired result is the life of those for whom the sacrifice is made: life granted, spared, or increased. The relationship with the deity here is not a contract. It is rather an act of persuasion and hope, in the expectation of a response that is not due in justice. The overall purpose of the sacrifice is to celebrate the beneficence of the deity, in thanksgiving, when the desired response comes, and/or (especially) to atone for an offence to that deity, who was offended, in expiation for what was done. Where there is a large area of non-negotiated guilt, there is already ground prepared for the practice of sacrifice. Communities with a large sense of undefined guilt, tend to practice sacrifice. The collective unconscious would seem to prefer to do these practices, rather than look at the guilt and do something about it. Perhaps we are not far from the roots of human violence: violence implies action without conscious awareness of the motivation or strength of the action. When such action is done on a 'victim' in 'sacrifice', it is called 'sacred', and the violence is deemed to 'demand' a (positive) divine response. [25]

The violent act that is done is intended to render something humanly irretrievable to the sacrificer, that is, for all intents and purposes, 'dead' to his interest and gain. In that sense, sacrifice costs him dearly. In this way, a 'real' offering is made to the deity, and transferred to the deity, since what is offered no longer belongs to the offerer, and is eliminated out of his domain. It is passed over to the exclusive domain of the deity, and so 'made sacred'. If what is sacrificed is something living, an animal, it is called a victim. A victim is thus the object of a sanctioned form of violence : it is 'legitimate' for society to treat it as a victim. The sanction consists in the establishment of a ritual for the performance of this sacrifice, and an office (priesthood) socially instituted to conduct it. Sacrifice is thus institutionalised and ritually justified and controlled violence, for a 'good' cause. The implication is that animal slaughter is permitted, not only for the sustenance of carnivores, but for other social purposes. In some at least of these cases, violence is allowed in the manner in which the killing takes place. There is a further implication, less developed in the theoretical literature, but present in fact, that this sacrificial violence could extend at times to the taking of human life.

There is always a tendency to use the language of sacrifice in an increasingly metaphorical sense, to describe situations of social life that are more or less analogous to the above base description. We tend in this way to speak of the way that capitalism at present 'sacrifices' lower-income earners to the interests of the propertied class, for the sake of 'progress'. We speak of the way Nazism 'sacrificed' the Jewish people, for the sake of its myth of racial purity. We speak of the way many people become self-effacing victims, who sacrifice themselves for those they love, or those to whom they have made commitments, for example, in family life. A certain spiritual language applauds the idea of 'self-immolation', that is, of presenting one's self as a (willing?) victim, by sacrificing self-interest for the sake of altruism. Certain forms of culture, prior to the advent of feminism, proposed this pattern particularly to women.

It is necessary to look at the historical evolution of these ideas.

Sacrifice : historical framework.

[25] It is in the 16th century that extreme *violence* was linked with sacrifice. Cf. the work of Grunewald at Colmar (tableau of Issenheim). It is in the 17th century that sacrifice largely came to mean something difficult to accomplish, and so was equated with *privations* (as in Lent). It is now recognised that these meanings are not Christian.

Sacrifice as legitimised violent victimisation can be studied in three dominant historical frameworks, two christian, and one Jewish.

The first is a certain stream of catholic theology of the past hundred years or so, which comes from the spirituality of the French oratory. That was a spirituality of kenosis, or self-emptying, or self-annihilation for the sake of others. It was the climax of a peculiarly French reaction to the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Entire theologies of Christ, redemption, and the eucharist have been built on it. It is interesting to note that liberal Protestantism in France, which has not significantly recognised the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist, has not advocated patriotic sacrifice; on the other hand, Roman Catholicism there, which strongly emphasised Eucharistic sacrifice, has also encouraged patriotic sacrifice. This spirituality has made a significant contribution to French approaches to politics (as in de Maistre), to culture (as in Peguy), and to theology (French modernism was a reaction against it, as in Loisy). It has been seen as the flowering of Tridentine Roman Catholicism, in which a strong sacrificial imagery confirmed an exclusively male and celibate priesthood, ensured the succession of the hierarchy, and left women and children in a relatively subordinate role. In this framework, there was insistence that the Eucharist was a true sacrifice (that of Christ on Calvary), and not simply a meal, and that the last supper be studied without being located in the context of the ongoing meals of Jesus. (Jay : 1992)

The second framework comes from the christian fourth century. At that time, there was a rise of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and a synthesis of ideas about hierarchically organised, celibate, male priests who live ascetical lives of spiritual sacrifice, and who represent the community in the ritual of the Eucharist, and thus serve the formation of a devotional church. Studies have suggested that many of these men came from father-ineffective families, and from a relatively low status in society (that is, from the 'proletariat'). It is suggested that they created a 'bourgeois' social christianity in which the patterns of patriarchy became hardened. Thus they (unwittingly) set up a situation for themselves, and their successors, in which social and internal conflict existed. The social conflict was between their real 'proletarian' character and the 'bourgeois' system they made for themselves, in which to find a kind of prestige to which they were not naturally accustomed. The internal conflict was between their claim to be priests, and their duty to be victims, who lived lives of spiritual sacrifice. Their resolution of the conflict came from a synthesis of the priesthood and victimhood of Christ in the Eucharist. Christ was simultaneously priest and victim there: his ministers could be the same. This in practice meant the adoption of what psychologically could be called a paranoid position. It demanded submission to the bourgeois patriarchy of ecclesiastical establishment, in the name of imitation of Christ and devotion to mother church. (Carroll: 1986)

The third framework is Jewish. Much of the discussion of sacrifice is conducted on the assumption that 'pagan' approaches to sacrifice did not exist in ancient times among Jewish people. Pagans were known to have practised human sacrifice and child sacrifice, especially the ritual killing of a first-born son, at the behest of, or at the hand, the father. It seems now that these practices were not unknown among the Jews. Human and child sacrifices, such as were practised in the religions of Moloch, Baal, El, etc., were historically conducted in Israel, and the impulse to do them never really died out. Levenson has shown that the Aqedah, or binding, of Isaac, is modelled on these things, and that the notion of Passover itself depends on the notion of sacrifice implied in them. It is true that the notion is transformed in Israel, but the transformation implies a 'redemption' or 'salvation' of those who were the intended victims, through the substitution of an alternate victim (such an animal). The result is a focus on religious identity as a 'spared victim'. This has been called the 'supreme paradigm of religious life' in the Jewish, and subsequently Christian, tradition. To be a person is at best to be a rescued Isaac. Issues of guilt and atonement are unconsciously affecting one's sensitivity to the entire arena of sacrificial concepts. (Levenson: 1993)

Much of the use of the language of sacrifice today is, without knowing it, an heir to nuances written into the meaning of the word in these three historical (and perduring) situations.

Sacrifice : various negative theories.

Different perspectives are adopted in attempts to get to the roots of the meaning of sacrifice. Some prefer to study sacrifice from the point of view of the victims: either innocent children, who are threatened and abused, or excluded women, who are not allowed to take part in the sacrificial cycle and are thus eliminated from its social benefits (like other victims). Others study sacrifice from the point of view of the one who performs it, identified in one way or another with the 'murderous father'. There is, however, unanimous interest in the violence of the act of sacrifice. It is difficult to synthesise these perspectives.

The various attempts at a synthesis exhibit two main difficulties. They are too willing to accept descriptive data without criticism, and they are too ready to identify various structures of society without asking why they are there. In a classic sociology/anthropology of the matter, from Mauss to Durkheim to Douglas, the act by which a society makes a distinction between what is sacred to it and what is profane, and so establishes itself, is simply described. It is usually said to do so by creating the difference between what is pure and what is impure, and thus establishing bonds within a group and boundaries around it. This is the ritual process. Sacrifice is addressed as one of its clearest examples, outside the family circle. The summit of this approach is what is now termed 'structuralist' (for example, that of Victor Turner), which attempts to uncover the underlying structures present in sacrificial experience, and the resulting benefits for society in the establishing of necessary boundaries.

At present, there is a more sensitive awareness to the reasons why such boundaries have been established. It is recognised that often they are in favour of the position of men in society, vis a vis that of women and children. In this horizon, sacrifice is seen as a male-engendered rite, biassed in favour of men. It is a ritual of differentiation and separation from women (and children), and of their subsequent subordination to and exclusion from the 'men's club' that 'runs' society. It creates exclusive male bonds that are stronger than blood bonds or marriage bonds. It even transcends intergenerational links and differences. It is now recognised as well, that the process that does all of this is violent. Once this dimension of violent elimination is seen in the sacrificial act, theories based on mere description of what is going on in society seem inadequate. There is something different, and quite specific, about sacrifice. It cannot be reduced to one more example of a ritual that serves one model of society.

There is a new quest for a post-structuralist analysis of the collective unconscious that does such things. It is deconstructionist in attitude : it reduces the classical notion of sacrifice to underlying (psychoanalytic) dynamics. Rene Girard was the first to work in this direction. He has exposed the actual, historical character of western civilisation as founded on profound acts of (sacrificial) violence against scapegoated victims. (O'Shea: 1996) A number of thinkers have followed in the same direction.

Some of them seem to glorify violence itself, and regard the expression of it as a good thing. The best example of this is the 'College de Sociologie' in France, whose representatives include Bataille, Caillois, Breton, Leiris... Taken to its full limit, their view would in effect deconstruct all culture, and all religion as it has been known. They tend to regard strong, hard-edged, transgressive violence as something to be celebrated: they are agents of violent extremism. They would destroy both the plane of the profane and the sphere of religion at the same time. For them, both are the result of a false, bourgeois, individualist consciousness. They advocate a violent sort of death to all of this, a kind of ecstasy of annihilation in which animal instincts are constrained neither by reason nor by social utility. There are shades of Nietzsche here, and of Hegel along the lines of Kojeve. This thinking influenced Lacan (via Caillois and Kojeve), and it has emerged in the Nazi Holocaust. It is not irrelevant to note some parallels with the French ascetical thinking outlined in the annihilationist spirituality above. (Strenski: 1996)

In his own different way, Mircea Eliade has embraced the same kind of romanticism of the irrational, in his approach to religion, ritual and sacrifice. Through interest in the 'coincidence of opposites', in tantra, in the 'via negativa', he has developed a mystique of what is beyond all rational understanding and control. There is also a tendency in such thinking (in the wake of both the French school and of Eliade), for mysticism-without-understanding to become either nominalist or strongly orthodox.

In contrast, other scholars have undertaken a more radical analysis of the experience of victimhood in sacrifice. Four can be mentioned : Levenson, Carroll, Beers, and Strenski.

Levenson recognised the prevalence of child sacrifice in the historical and conceptual roots of Jewish and of Christian religion. He set up the model of the 'spared victim' as the sublime paradigm of religiousness in those traditions. His is an attempt to maintain these religious traditions, but the price he asks is high. There is little room for positive development of personhood or mutual relationship, and the kind of religion ('annihilationist') that remains, is at odds with the (legitimate) aspirations of contemporary (personalist) culture. Levenson seems to canonise a victimal kind of holiness as a counter-cultural necessity, and to trace its origins in the (undesirable) reality of violence in human matters. (Levenson: 1993)

Carroll begins his theoretical thinking on the basis of observations about fourth century christianity (summarised above). He sees that there were then some ego-weak males who, in developing their devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, were expressing a desire for their mother, that is, for an identification with the feminine. These desires they (unconsciously) repressed. Unconscious conflict resulted. They projected it. They wanted both identification with the Blessed Virgin, and the office of sacrificing priests. They wanted to perform a ritual which of its nature was

designed to subordinate and eliminate women from positions of significance in the community, while asserting in the strongest terms the supreme place of one woman, Mary, in the church. In Carroll's analysis, there followed a self-punishment for taking this incongruent position. It took the form of (ineffective) attempts at self-emasculation. An instance of this, according to Carroll, was the emergence of clerical celibacy. As celibate, the male sacrificers were forbidden access to women, and so could not harm or do violence to them. A further instance is the emergence of the entire set of ascetical practices (around which a metaphorical language of sacrifice emerged) that surrounded the spirituality of the priesthood. A theology of the sacrificial passion and death of Christ on the cross, both emerged from this, and supported it. (Carroll: 1986)

Beers is to a great extent dependent on the psychoanalytical vision of Heinz Kohut for his analysis of sacrifice. Kohut's interest is in the self, and its emergence into full selfhood. He has his own theory about the emergence of the male self. It begins with the special relationship of the male child with his mother. In this theory, the mother presents herself as different from, and thus alien to, the identity of the male child. She is thus perceived as a danger to the self-esteem, integrity and capacity to act, of the male. As a result, the male who is no longer a child is characteristically threatened, in ways similar to his infantile experience, by dangers to self-esteem and integrity and potency, that occur in later life. In brief, the male is more threatened than the female by engulfment by the feminine. This is then the reason why men, in their own male way, tend to fear, envy, control, degrade and even abuse women. In reality, they are trapped in their own Narcissism and afraid of experiences of differentiation which they also want. Profound conflict exists here. (Beers: 1992)

Beers makes use of this model and extends it, when he looks at ritual sacrifice. He is aware that it is men, not women, who perform this ritual. He sees the male as deeply desirous of merging with his own idealised self-object, and yet deeply unable to merge with it because of the fear of entrapment by it. For the male, the prospect of connecting with it is also the prospect of being destroyed by it. The name for this is 'disintegration anxiety', a dominant function of male Narcissism. There stems from it a strong desire to separate (from mothers, women, and ideals). Beers then suggests that the male investment in the performance of sacrificial rituals is an example of these dynamics. The sacrifice is an attempt at the elimination of the 'problem', so that unworried differentiation can take place. But the story does not end there. The anxiety of the male is so deep that it re-activates when the male is aware of his attempt to be free from the anxiety. This is why men - in the classic example of sacrifice - tend to negate their own gender by sacrificing their own first-born sons. The sacrificial model of 'negated identity' has begun, and continues in the language, rhetoric, and logic of metaphorical sacrifice.

Strenski points out that the male act of performing sacrifice runs the risk of the extinction of the male altogether, that is, of the termination of the male line, through the murder of the first-born. He sees this as part of the deep ambivalence of the act itself. The result of the ritual, as he sees it, is the establishment of the priority of 'second order', abstract, artefacted relationships, over 'first order', concrete, natural relationships : a situation that itself retains deep ambiguity. (Strenski: 1996)

There is a common denominator of all these critical theories of sacrifice. It is a particular notion of the human person. This notion is Narcissistic, self-punishing, closed to relationship with others, and with God, even with its self. There is a kind of individualism here, which separates the human from the other, whether it is another human or a god. It opens the way to a non-relational, impersonal view of life. Malina has observed that in historical fact it has led to the extreme separation of church and state, to the triumph of the technological, and to the elevation of economics (not kinship or even politics) as the focus of social institutions. There is a real dimension of depressiveness in the overall approach to sacrifice, which presents itself as a ritual of desperation in the face of an excess of negativity in human life. There are links between this view of the person and some telling analyses of contemporary western culture. It is interesting to note, all the same, that Jesus has often been made the carrier of all of these negative notions of sacrifice. An alternative approach to sacrifice is needed.

Sacrifice : a positive theory.

This approach is rooted in a phenomenology of gift-giving. Our language itself shows us how fundamental a reality 'giving' is. We speak of 'given' facts. To be is the same as to be given (in German: es gibt). We 'give and take', we give something away, we give way to another person. When we give a gift, we call it a present : and the temporal present is constituted by the gift of what has been, and of what will be. The gift, or the present, is in the here and now of the giving. It is like an e-vent that stands out from the run of things. It is not a thing, but a person, that gives and is given. In giving a gift, we give ourselves as givers, in the very act of giving, for the other to whom the gift and the giver are at once given. There is something sacred about the process of gift-giving. The act of giving is indeed a

'sacrum facere', a 'sacrifice'. It does not imply alienation, but overture. In it there is no irretrievability, but transfer of one's very self to the enjoyed delight of self and other. (Milbank: 1995)

The act of such giving does not of itself imply a demand for a return. Even if a return gift is made by the recipient of a gift, the return is never quite the same as the original gift. Each gift is unique, and different in its own right. One is original overture, the other is gracious gratitude. There is strictly no 'exchange' of gifts, there is only the integrated process of engagement and responsiveness, a giving and a thanks-giving. The receiving is itself active. It implies in the recipient the recognition of now being a 'gifted' person, that is, of having been graced already before one could do anything about it. This is a kind of self-transcendence, that mirrors the self-transcendence of the original giver in the act of giving. This discovery of similarity in the transcending of what might seem to have been, in the process by which real difference is expressed and enjoyed, is the foundation of the primordial sense of analogy that each person carries in his or her personal awareness. There is a quality here that has no need of defence, and can thus be purely enjoyed : that is its sacredness. Sacrifice is a good term for these mysteries, but it is a term without any connotation of negativity, or of destruction. The difference here from previous theories is the focus on positive persons who positively interact, rather than on things that are used in the interaction. Interpersonal communication is itself a holy mystery.

It can be noted here that only with the sense of analogy outlined above, can there be a real and positive understanding of the act of giving as sacred and sacrificial. If human acts are regarded as all being much the same, that is, as univocal in significance, there is no real engagement of distinct persons. If they are regarded as all being quite different, that is, as equivocal in significance, there is no meeting of person with person. There is a link between the lack of appreciation of this analogy and the development of theories of sacrifice based on destruction.

The act of offering a gift is an act of agape, not of eros. It transcends the opacity of desire, and opens up a mysterious access between person and person. This is much more true when a human person makes a gift to God. A divine person is not only someone who can -infinitely- make an overture of self-giving to a finite person; a divine person is also someone who can -infinitely- be present to the offerer, receive and welcome the offering, and reciprocate, with the infinity of the divine Self, to the giver. Even more : a divine person is someone who so enjoys this event that he, as it were, longs for it, and is always in the posture of someone accessible and available for its happening.

This more positive vision of sacrifice does not sit very congruently with rituals of sacrifice that involve the killing of a living being. This vision of priesthood does not sit very congruently with the identification of a priest as a butcher. It is much more germane to certain Asian cultures, and their practice of unbloody sacrifice. In the Vedas, there is a focus on the sacrificial offering, to a deity, of rice-barley cakes, of flowers, of fruit. It is an act of wisdom, not of violence. It stems from the attitude known as Ahimsa, or non-injury, non-violence. It could well be suggested that, at least in the domain of ritual sacrifice, these cultures have reached a level of civilisation not (yet) achieved in the west. In Greek and in ancient Jewish cultures, there were rituals of sacrifice other than those known as 'expiatory': they were called sacrifices of celebration and festivity. In some ways they share something of the higher gentleness of the Asian world. (Doniger:1990) (Malina: 1996)

Sacrifice is a *joyful* expression of union with God. It is a *gift* from us to the God who is always present, and a *communion* granted to us by that same God. The thanksgiving element is primary. It *thanks for life* in God. Blood is the locus and sign of life: so blood is used in the sacrifice. It is dynamic, joyous, vivifying. It is a feast. A song of love. An exceptional wine. 'Un nectar d'orchidees'. Profound joy in mutual recognition. The whole point of it is 'aimantation' that comes from a holy desire. This love is achieved and consummated in delight, delight in the drawing by the God that makes it all possible. The result is an incorporation: into the people of this God, and into the common (communional) will of both the God and the people together.

Sacrifice : the genius of Israel.

We need to focus on the Jewish context of sacrifice, and on rituals that are unbloody. Despite failures in practice and in some forms of interpretation, there is in the core mystery of Israel something that is not only open to the more positive mystery of sacrifice we have looked at, but that transforms even the practice of bloody sacrifice in that vein. What Jesus did was indeed a transformation of the idea of sacrifice, but it continued a metamorphosis that had already been present in the ancient times of Israel.

The whole genius of Israel, as a people of faith in covenant, could be termed a spirituality of living access to God. Their God was much nearer to them than the gods of the nations were to the gentile peoples. Their God was bound to them in the covenant bond. Even when they violated the covenant rules, their God never abandoned the covenant relationship with them. They had, always, the right and privilege of access to their God, so that He could heal and care for them. It is this faith that changed the meaning and interpretation of what they did, when they copied the externals of the bloody sacrificial rituals of their gentile neighbours.

In Hebrew history, *communion (thanksgiving)* sacrifice is earliest, (earlier than holocausts), and expiatory sacrifice is mainly post-exilic: after some time, holocausts took on an expiatory meaning. There was never a question of inflicting suffering, but of *expressing union with God.* Immolation (destroying the victim) was not an act essential to sacrifice at all (and was not done by the offerer but by the priest 'butcher'). To destroy is not an act agreeable to the Hebrew God. The gift offered in the sacrifice was made useless for other purposes, and taken up into the domain of the invisible.

The point of the sacrifice was not death. It was a ritual redistribution of the body of the animal offered. Among those who ate it, there were set up new lines of kinship, that created new 'family' relations. This is for men (only): women entered the kinship-relationship through the blood of childbirth.

When they took an animal, and laid hands on it to identify with it, they then took the blood from the animal to present it to their God. The result was in fact the destruction of the animal, but their intention was not destructive. If they could have obtained the animal's blood without destroying or killing it, one senses that they would have done so. The aim of the act was the obtaining of the blood. The blood was considered to contain the life of the animal, and so to be sacred. Once they got hold of it, they took it to the place where they considered God to be specially and irrevocably present. They took it, for example, to the holy of holies in the temple, and there they either poured it over the altar of God's presence, or sprinkled it towards the place of the presence. The meaning of the gesture was to unite their own life, symbolised by the blood, with God's life, and thus to renew the covenant that bonded these two lives into one.

The same positive, constructive mentality can be seen in the meaning they attached to the practice of burning the carcass of the animal that had been slain to obtain the blood. The purpose this time was not to annihilate or destroy the animal, or to reduce it to ashes. It was to turn the physical remains of the animal into smoke. Smoke (a little like blood) was considered to be holy, on the grounds that it could, naturally, rise to the heavens where God lived. They (in various intercessory formulas) identified their lives with each puff of smoke as it rose up, and allowed the smoke to go to the God of the heavens, and thus unite their lives with his, again, in a renewal of the covenant bond.

If anything remained of the animal, it was used for a communion ritual, in which they considered that God's people, and God himself, partook together in the same meal, since they partook of the same covenanted life. This transformation of the referents of the symbols of bloody sacrifice goes as far as possible towards a real change in the meaning of sacrifice itself.

Recent work from biblical researchers has shown the real meaning that was attached to the process we have translated into English under the name 'expiation'. It fits into the constructive model of sacrifice just suggested. It comes from the ancient ritual known as 'kipper' - specialists now tell us that it is very ancient indeed, and not, as was often said, a development in post-exilic Israel. The ritual took place in the temple, and was conducted by the high priest, on the day known as Yom Kippur. The word 'kipper' linguistically means to cover or recover something, to repair a hole, to cure a sickness, to mend a rift, to make good a torn or broken covering. The object of the verb in ancient times was not a person or a sin, but a place or a thing that was considered contaminated and in need of cleansing. Behind the temple practices and rituals that involved 'kipper', there were creation myths. What was taking place in the temple in the rituals, referred to things that had taken place, or better, were still actually taking place, in the heavens themselves. The temple was the symbol of heaven, and indeed the meeting place of heaven and earth. There was a liturgy in heaven which was being symbolised by the liturgy taking place in the temple. The Lord himself was the celebrant of the heavenly liturgy, and the high priest in the temple symbolised and stood for the Lord. What the high priest did, was considered to be actually done by the Lord. In the myth of the fall of the angels in the cosmos, it was thought that damage had been done to the fabric of creation itself. The temple, like the cosmos, was considered to have been polluted thereby. The Lord was then believed to be purifying and cleansing the cosmos as the high priest cleansed and purified the temple by sprinkling it with blood and pouring blood, that is, life, on its significant places. (Barker: 1996)

Whenever iniquity occurred among the chosen covenant people, something similar to the original angelic fall was thought to have happened, and needed similar treatment. The high priest, acting in the name of the Lord, had to carry away, that is, remove, the iniquity, and cleanse the temple and the lifeworld of the people. The sin or iniquity was not carried by the victim that was slain, in a destructive interpretation of sacrifice. It was 'carried' by the high priest, in three complementary processes. First, he applied blood to the parts of the temple considered to be affected and contaminated by the iniquity committed. Secondly, he literally absorbed the negative effects of the transgression, by eating the flesh of the victim which symbolically represented the contaminated people: he assimilated and took them into himself. The mythic understanding meant that the Lord himself was prepared to do exactly this, and actually did it, as the high priest performed the temple ritual. Thirdly, the priest then transferred the iniquity he had taken upon himself, to the goat called the scapegoat (not the animal slain): the Hebrew word for this scapegoat is the same as the Hebrew word for devil. He then banished the scapegoat that bore the iniquity and removed both from the people.

In the Danielic prophecies of the Son of Man, we find a myth that takes these themes even further. This Son of Man, anointed and chosen by God, ascends to the Throne (of God) itself, bringing with him the blood of the Just. The idea is that there will be one Central Man of all history, of all Jewish and indeed human history, who as a universal high priest will cleanse and carry away universal iniquity itself. This theme is central to the argument of the epistle to the Hebrews, which identifies Jesus as this priest, in these very functions of priesthood.

In the Isaian songs of the suffering servant of the Lord, the same core of ideas is present. The suffering servant is seen to sprinkle many peoples, and carry away their sicknesses and weaknesses; he is charged with the defilement of all of us; the covenant bond of our peace is his responsibility; he pours out his very life as sin-offering. We do need to distinguish carefully the genuinely Jewish themes here, from pagan ones that have been semi-quoted and then refuted in the text. Matthew has used the themes, and many of the word-patterns, of these songs, to describe what Jesus did in his healing ministry in Galilee.

The letters to Ephesians and Colossians, in the hymns which form their prologues, suggest something of a cosmic reconciliation achieved in this manner. In doing so they pick up the lines of Paul's great vision of cosmic 'togethering' in 2 Corinthians 5.

It is a pity that the ancient Hebrew word, 'kipper', has been translated into English as 'atone' or 'expiate'. It gives the impression that the subject of the verb was the human being who had sinned, and not the Lord, operating through the high priest. It also gives the impression that the object of the operation was the appeasement of the divine anger, and not the cleansing of humanity and the removal of iniquity and its traces from the human world. As a result, the thematics of cleansing ('kipper') have been changed into those of expiation, and the negative and destructive theories of sacrifice have constructed a foundation for themselves.

A natural logic could be discerned here, which would want to see the mindset of this theology of access and positivity in the gift-offering of sacrifice, extended to the situation of unbloody sacrifice, and in particular to that of the family meal. Historically, this did not happen in Israel, at least, in times prior to those of Jesus. Malina has suggested that Levitical reforms of sacrifice virtually eliminated domestic sacrifice, so that all recognised forms of sacrifice henceforth were, in his terminology, public and political. Whatever the reasons, there is no evidence that an extension of the constructive theory of sacrifice to the meal, has actually occurred.

Links with theologies of Eucharist.

There are three accepted areas of discussion concerning the Eucharist that have contributed to the obscuring of the original meaning of the meals of Jesus, and of their special sacrificial dimensions. These same areas have thereby contributed to an obscuring of the meal and sacrifice dimensions of the Eucharist. They are: first, the tendency to contrast the ritual concerning the bread, with that concerning the cup. Secondly, the tendency to contrast the ritual concerning the entire 'consecration' (of bread and cup) with the whole symbolic process. Thirdly, the tendency to contrast the entire arena of ritual process with the real presence of the person of the Eucharistic Christ. These tendencies end up by fragmenting the mystery, because they fail to locate the divine activity at work in everything that is happening.

The first of these tendencies is to contrast the bread rite with the cup rite. A contrast between bread and cup has been interpreted as a contrast between body and blood, indeed a 'sacramental' separation of body from blood, that is, in a sacramental and mystical sense, a death. This contrast does not appear to be intended in the earliest biblical texts.

Its presence in the liturgical and theological tradition has opened the door to destruction theories of sacrifice as applied to the Eucharist. It has thereby closed the door to any understanding of the Mass as a meal.

The second tendency is to contrast the 'consecration' rite with the whole symbolic process. This has, unfortunately, created a kind of opposition between the consecration and the rest of the liturgical rite. In the early centuries, this gave rise to grave conflict between western and eastern churches, specifically on the question of the role of the epiclesis of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist. In effect, in the west, the entire remainder of the rite, including the epiclesis, was so subordinated to the consecration, that dimensions of sacrifice were sought in the words of consecration as if they existed in solitary isolation. This too removed the congruence of seeing the rite in any sense as a meal: a meal is not primarily a formula of (sacred) words.

The third tendency is to contrast the entire ritual process with the person of Christ, present really in the Eucharist. This has created an impression that the real presence of the Lord, as an objective reality, is more important than and different from the signification of the ritual and its symbols. It has focussed discussion away from the primacy of the meal and the sacrifice, for this reason.

The basic problem with all these tendencies is that the divine action (the coming of the Kingdom) is not included or given sufficient prominence in the Eucharistic event. The double ritual, in its entire symbolic context, and with the real presence of the Lord, is explored in a forgetfulness of the most important dimension of all : the actual adventing of the God of the poor. Something is lost to the theological synthesis, and something is lost to the historical reality of what Jesus did.

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6. THE ETHICS OF REDEMPTION

We have examined the atonement mentality and its background. We have looked at the scriptural possibilities underneath it and found nothing substantial. We have presented the positive scriptural themes that could be the basis of an alternative at-one-ment model.

Present-day theologians, ask different sets of questions about this. They focus on two issues:

1. the **models of justice** that are implied in an at-one-ment model, and
2. the **models of action** that are implied in the way we live, if we believe in an at-one-ment model.

1. The models of justice implied in an at-one-ment model.

Almost everyone, since St.Paul himself, insists that God and Jesus are into a kind of justice that is not our kind of justice." They call it a **divine justice** rather than a human one, or something like that. Saint Paul fell back on the phrase the "justice of God" in the Romans. He was not using the Hebrew root din (equivalent to human court justice), which is translated into Greek as krisis or krima. He was using the Hebrew root tsedaqa (a special divine steadfastness in covenant), which is translated into Greek as dikaiosune. But what do we mean by that? And how do we live a justice of that kind? It's a question that is not often spelt out in too much detail.

Let's start with the **justice.**

It is not possible to do this entirely in the abstract. What you are always thinking about is Israel, because **Israel's God practised a kind of radical justice with Israel**, that wasn't practised anywhere else or by anyone else in ancient times. **Jesus was an innovator, because he practised a continuation of that same kind of justice with the little people of Galilee**. So it is Israel/Jesus that are always in the back of our minds as the concrete reality that we are trying to think about. We need to learn from this history, not force it into our categories of justice.

Now if you look at justice of any kind, you are talking about an **economy.** An economy literally in Greek is the *oikos nomos* – it's the way you organize the household – the *nomos* is the law or the organization, the *oikos* refers to the household in the set-up that you are in. So "**how in justice does the household really get organized?"** is the underlying question. And the answer is in terms of some kind of **equality** among the people who live there. And I would say: "Fair enough!" but the whole question is: "What kind of equality?"

That means that in practice there is **a distribution of the goods** of the household in some **equalness or justness** among all that live there. And that's the justness and the rightness of the household. That would mean that there

have to be **some options**, if you are talking about a special kind of justice, like God's justice. The options are difficult, demanding, and I think challenging.

First of all, if you are going to talk about **God's kind of justice** or **Jesus' kind of justice**, there must be **no profit** made by anyone at the expense of anyone. Well, tell that to the business community today. But that is the real implication of it, and you are talking here, not just of an economic option, or a political option, but a very **ethical** option. It does come back to an issue of ethics. **This is really how God tried to get Israel to behave, and showed them how to do so by behaving like that himself**. There would be **no profit** for anybody in Israel at the expense of other people in Israel. So that "**there must be no poor among you**" became literally a very beautiful vision of how they would live. They are not talking about declarations on paper. They are talking about **doing things in practice**. About doing them differently.

This is what the whole practice of the **Jubilee** was all about. It means that there were some things that management or leaders could have done and opted deliberately not to do, so that there would be **no profit at the expense of others**. And if you live like that, you are living a very unusual kind of justice. And that is the kind of justice that does seem to come through, if you discern underneath the texts what the God of Israel was doing and was asking Israel to do. It's an extraordinary non-business approach to life.

For example, if you are talking about the life of Jesus, **Jesus** could have avoided the crucifixion at the expense of the little people. He could have said: "Well, forget the little people. Let their rulers put them down. I want a comfortable life." But he made a **clear option** not to do that, **in the name of this sort of unusual justice that had to include all the little people**. It's a very demanding thing – a very challenging thing. I don't think it is very popular in the present world.

The second idea is that there is **no revenge against anybody** - revenge in the sense of retaliation for anything they might have done. You see, you've got it beautifully in that whole notion of God's attitude to people, who might offend God or do something wrong by God. In some sense, I suppose, as Hosea put it, God could have got angry with them, but it wasn't possible for God to do that, because of the nature of God. **God is not an avenging God** or a killer God. **God acts out of bounty**. It is God's nature to do so. By God's own bounty, **God is bound to be bountiful** to us creatures, even when we sin. **God refuses to hold sin against sinful humanity**. Instead, in virtue of the same principle of bounty, **God uses the sin** as the **occasion for more bounty**. God enables sinful humanity to return to its Creative Source; God draws it back into the original movement of divine love.

I like to reflect on **apocalyptic imagery** in the scriptures and in the Church's language and rhetoric. Nearly every time you present an apocalyptic God, you present **a killer God**. 'Apocalypse' means black and white; good and bad; winner and loser; - and that implies death, and that implies killing. I think of some groups, - I'm thinking, say, of typical Islamic terrorist fundamentalist groups - who see themselves as the killer children of the killer God in a holy war.

You must not do that, if you are going to practise this **unique radical justice** that is implied in an **at-one-ment model**. The real God of Israel didn't do that, but was always open to being understanding and being *simpatico*, no matter what the people did. This God didn't have to be placated, or anything like that. **God as God needs nothing. God as God needs to be bountiful. God is bound in a divine kind of justice to himself, to be so.**

And the third issue is tougher still. In this model of radical justice, there is **no primacy of compassion.** Well, bad luck to 'project compassion' or to the St. Vincent de Paul Society or such attempts to be kind to others. You have to realize that the need for a basic compassion arises from the **weakness of a market model**, and, if you don't believe in the market model, you can't believe in the primacy of compassion. You have to believe in the primacy of **radical distributive justice**, in which there is no need for the primacy of compassion. There is compassion, yes, but it is as a secondary dimension to the practice of justice. I think this is something that is going to take generations to learn.

John Dominic **Crossan** has said it so often and so well here. He says, if you live by **compassion**, you could get **canonized**, but if you live by **justice**, you will probably get **crucified**. This is similar to **Helder Camara's comment**: "I give bread to the poor and they call me a saint. I ask why they haven't got enough bread, and they call me a communist."

I think the **Church** has been pushing the **primacy of compassion** too much, because it looks at the present situation and says it's a market economy, where some people get put down and retaliated against, and we have to

have compassion and help them out. But really the vision isn't of helping anyone out. The vision comes right from the words of the scriptures themselves, which tell us **there shouldn't be anybody like that around**.

The last issue is that there must be **no purity system.** Purity systems tend to set up divisions between the haves and the have-nots, between the elite and the ordinary struggling outsiders.

What I'm talking about in a **purity system** is that in every community there is a sense that there are sources of life, and often these sources of life are regarded as taboo, sacred- "don't touch them!" e.g. in Jesus' day, one was excluded as **ritually impure** if one touched a dead person, if one had some contagious skin infection, if one touched menstrual blood. In our day, there is a kind of ritual impurity practised by those who live in comfortable security, and who treat, almost as untouchable, those who live on the wrong side of the tracks, who dress shabbily, who don't speak right, who even smell. Such people are ostracized. They are blamed for being poor.

In a purity system, the **sources of life**, like land and water and food, are also regarded as not large enough for everybody, so that some get hold of the benefits and others don't – bad luck! Well, if we practise the **radical justice of God**, we don't think like that. We think there are sources of life that are sacred in their **openness to everybody**, and we think there are enough of them, and they are large enough for everybody. They are big enough to be shared by all, and they **ought** to be shared by all, in a kind of justice that is bigger than the way we normally behave.

So that, if we want **a radically just way of living**, that is congruent with all that vision about **at-one-ment**, we've got to say: "**Don't have a purity system**." Let's not have a special track for the elite to benefit from. And that is enormously demanding. It seems to me that, if we could get any outfit to behave like that, we'd be past most of our problems, because this is where most of the problems really lie. But in ordinary human history, it doesn't happen all that often.

If we did practise a radical justice, that included that sort of behaviour, what would we call that justice? Again we haven't really got words for it. It's **not** what people call **commutative justice**, which governs transactions between one individual and another. This is different and bigger. It's more aware of the general population. It's **not** the **justice** that obtains **between a superior and an inferior**, which means a decent way of being decent to people, who depend on you. And it's **not** what the classic tradition has sometimes called **general justice** or an equitable way of managing the whole earth's resources. The Greens are often into a general sort of justice that way. The justice we are talking about is more than all of that –and it's very hard to say exactly what kind of justice it is.

Dominic Crossan believes this radical justice we must practise is a form of **distributive justice.** When we say God is love, we must realize that "love" in the New Testament means much the same thing as "justice" in the Old Testament. And that is "distributive justice". "Love" is *agape,* and *agape* means sharing. That's what it means in the New Testament. It's a very sharp thing. It's not a nice, warm feeling. Having *agape* means: Are we ready to share what we've got, not by giving part of what we own to the poor, but by sharing what we've got, all we've got, **because** we believe it is **owned by a God who gives to everyone**, and that therefore **we** are no more than **stewards** of what we've got.

It's not just that we feel warm towards one another – but **whatever we've got, we're willing to share**. And we do.

It's much easier to give a certain amount in charity, than to admit that the serious challenge is that the **stuff of life belongs to God**, and we get it on borrowed time – and we'd better use it as God does, because it won't work any other way.

Jesus' challenge is **not** about **giving to the poor**. It's **not** even about having a **preferential option for the poor**. It's about having a **preferential option for justice**. And when Jesus talks about justice, he means **distributive justice in God's way**.

How is the **world to be shared among its inhabitants**, if we believe that the world belongs to God? That's what comes out of the Jewish tradition.

Most of us would prefer maybe to give 10% to charity. But that's us giving **our stuff** to somebody else. That's us giving **part** of what we own to somebody in need. That's another vision completely from saying "The world

belongs to God". Therefore **we are to share properly – divinely - what God owns**. We are **God's stewards**. God is saying to us: "You're in charge of running this world. Don't mess it up!" because a just-God's-earth will not work any other way.

Crossan takes very seriously the belief that God is a **God of Justice**. For him, this is the **very nature of God**. If we're serious about creation, creation is not who made the world, but **who owns the world**. God is about **distributive justice**. God is not about judgment in terms of retributive justice and punishment. **God is justice itself**. Justice and vengeance are very close together, in opposition to each other. It is nonsense to say the OT is all vengeance and the NT is all love and justice. What we have is a duel of vengeance and justice right through the OT, through Judaism, through Christianity, through the human heart. **Is my God into vengeance or justice?** What am I into?

If you pick up treatises on justice in the past, you really won't find a chapter or a paragraph about this kind of justice. It just isn't normally classified. And maybe it isn't even justice, as most people use the word. There might be another word we haven't made up for it yet. But at least I would say this, that there is a kind of ***'noblesse oblige'* in God and us**, as a result of the kind of love we've been given in **God's creative act**. I go back all the time to creation. **The creative act of God is probably the key to it all** – and, in that creative act of God, it's not simply that God made us from nothing - that God made us virtually equivalent to God – that **God created us in order to have other persons to love**. Within God, you could have only three persons. And God said: "I want more. I want you." And so God made us outside of God to be virtually the equal of God in a love relationship. Now, if we grasp that, and I don't think anyone ever does frankly – it's too big to grasp – there is a *'noblesse oblige'* in that kind of relationship – that **God**, having loved us like that, is **committed to us eternally**, and can never let us go out of existence. There is too much investment of love in us for that - and if we realized it, we would realize a '*noblesse oblige*' in us, to a God of that kind.

When you think about it, **God owes it to us in justice to take us to heaven**, and if God didn't do that, God should go to hell. We don't think like that. We think it is an enormous grace of handout if God eventually takes us to heaven. But we've got our ticket. **We've even got a reserved seat**. We still haven't the right words, but this is as near as we've been able to get to it.

There is an extraordinary sort of understanding and commitment here. And that would mean that, **between us and God** as a result, there is **a justice**, but it is the justice **as if between divine persons,** God being a **real** divine person, and us being made as if a divine person, by the creative act of God. And there is a justice implied there, which means that **God has always to behave to us, as divinely creative of us**. And we have a justice obligation to behave to God and to one another, as if we were divine persons.

Now that is getting close to a theology that undergirds the very notion of **covenant,** that we were talking about before. But I don't see this spelt out much in text books of theology. I don't think that even some people, who teach theology, would agree with it. They would probably say we were claiming too much – we are not divine persons – with which I would have to agree – we are not – but **we are treasured by God** as if we were. **If God treats us as if we were divine**, **we have to treat one another as if we were**, not out of compassion or an extension of charity, but **out of a sense of the justice** implied in that kind of relationship. And that's a different ballpark, and it's that sense of the difference in the ballpark, that really is **the challenge of the whole at-one-ment model**, and that's where I think we should be moving towards – we'll never quite get there. I mean, as regards "getting there", we won't do that short of the resurrection. But, this side of it, we are meant to move towards it a little bit in whatever manoeuvres we can make.

And I think that's different. You see, if you really reflect on the **life of Jesus**, that we have already touched on a couple of times, what Jesus did fundamentally is not just have a nice Christmas for himself and a few shepherds and a few Magi. Basically, the **incarnation** is **his going down and entering into the life of the little people** in his ministry, in that **all-inclusive sort of solidarity love**. It's an option for the poor, if you want to call it that. He does that **in the sense of justice**, because **Jesus regards** every one of those little **people of Galilee as virtually divine persons**, and he will never claim any prerogatives for himself, by way of exception, that he wouldn't extend to them too. That's "Love one another as I have loved you," very literally, isn't it? It's a demand that is higher than the usual expression of the demands of justice.

We might say that it's true these days that a lot of the **sins** we used mumble about, say in confession or to ourselves, are not sins at all –, but I think we often don't mutter anything about **having violated justice** most of the time, and having lived at a **lower level of justice** than this kind of justice.

Even the whole **Calvary** thing. **Jesus doesn't die on the cross to atone for our sins**. Forget that! He remains in **fidelity to the justice he owes to the little people**, once he has stood up to the authorities on their behalf. He prefers to be crucified rather than back down from that. That's the implication of it.

This is the same **fidelity of Israel –** the same justice of Israel. In a sense there is not much new in Jesus that wasn't in Israel. It's an enormously **Jewish notion**.

If you talk about **resurrection,** I think you make a mistake, by limiting the mystery to what it did for Jesus as an individual, say, in the glory of his own body or something. That's not the point. The **point of the resurrection** is that the **energy** and the **release of energy in the Spirit**, that happens in Jesus in resurrection, **cannot in justice be kept in Jesus for himself**. He has to pour it out upon everybody, and that outpouring of the Spirit, that Pentecost dimension, is part of what Easter is about. In fact, I think it's the main part. There's a kind of **distributive justice of a divine kind**, in giving the Holy Spirit, if you could say it that way. I think this takes away the sort of getting grace from an arbitrary handout from God.

One of the troubles with all this is that you've got two things happening.

1. You've got **Jewish models of old**,
2. and you've got a very **sophisticated**, **philosophical** or **theological translation of them**.

We are living, not in a Jewish culture, but in a very **post-modern, post-secular, post-European, post-Greek culture**. We've no examples of this - no sort of patterns of living out of that culture, in which we can see traces. So we are talking about **an ideal without a culture**. We are talking about applied theology – but this theology hasn't been applied yet in that sense. That's one of the difficulties.

The other thing is, that the **vision** of it, which I think is true, is that **the relations of God to us are justice relations** of that divine kind. We haven't got even holy examples in the lives of the saints. You might be able to scratch up one or two, if you are pushing yourself a bit, but you'd be pushing. And therefore it remains a vision. It doesn't look like an immediately do-able thing. Do you see the problem? I think we can't get around that one. It's just the nature of the case.

We've been talking at several stages of these talks about the **devotional complex** in the Church, which has come out of an atonement track. I think this comes out in the **Church's present understanding of Jesus**, which is Christmas and the crib, Good Friday to atone for our sins, and Resurrection to look like a body that's Mr. Universe. I'm not advocating this, but I think it's what a lot of people think.

This misses the whole point of what **the mysteries of Jesus** are about, when you boil it all down.

- It's the ministry of **identification with the people in justice.**
- It's the **standing firm in justice**, despite the consequences, which is the whole point of Good Friday and Easter.
- And it's the **communication in justice**, of the **gift of resurrection** to the **whole world** through the **gift of the Holy Spirit**.

That's a different thing. We're not even talking that different thing enough. So, you can see that people are tapping into the **world of justice**, and are asking us questions that need to be asked. We don't have ready answers. So, I think really we may have yet to invent another word for justice. I don't know what the other word is yet. I don't think I would fall back on charity. I think that sounds less in present ears. You'd have to have a highly sophisticated, theological version of charity to use the word there. But this **at-one-ment with God** is **not a spirituality** or a pious thing. It's an **earthy**, **real thing**, with huge implications of grass roots justice:

- such as no profit-making at the expense of anyone,
- no retaliation in revenge,
- no falling back on compassion or the St. Vincent de Paul,
- and no purity system that really creates elites.

Well, that would be a massive demand in the Church, not to mention in the secular world.

Can we now look at models of living in the spirit of at-one-ment and its justice?

How do we actually **live our lives in a spirit of at-one-ment**?
How do we act, if we believe all this and want to do something about it?

This is even harder to express, because I think the **goals** have all **changed.** I can understand why a lot of people, who haven't had the benefit of being introduced to this slowly, feel that half-way through the game, somebody did change the goal posts, and that all the things, that they thought were good, were now regarded as not important.

What I have done here is just collect **a few hints**, suggestions, from a number of thinkers, and just share with you the direction of their thought. I don't think any of them would regard themselves as having reached the finish point in it at all. I'm thinking of: **David Burrell**, **Norris Clarke**, **Raimund Schwager**, **Tom Weinandy**, and **John Milbank**.

David Burrell has been professor of both philosophy and theology at Notre Dame in USA for some time. Presently he spends half the year in Tantur in Israel, teaching there a course on God, with a Rabbi and an Islamic scholar. He asks questions like**: "What's wrong with the world?"** And he comes up with an answer that many would find excessive.

He believes in **creation** as the fundamental paradigm. And creation means there is a **participating Source** of life and meaning, namely God, and we simply are sharing in that mystery, and that our basic vocation is **thanksgiving** to God for this. He is right in that, entirely.

But he says that what happens is, that people develop **life-projects** without reference to the participating Source. Namely, they are going to get on in life and achieve their goals and targets irrespective of God and anybody else in the universe, and he says that's the trouble. He says that's **ambition, NOT gratitude.** That's **forgetfulness**, in Heidegger's sense of the word, **of the originating gift – reality - from God**. That's a refusal of God's original peace, but God's original peace comes from living in gratitude to God. The title of Burrell's book is: <u>God's Original Peace.</u>

St. Thomas has an expression, saying that **every time we do wrong**, **it's a non-consideration of creation,** and Burrell has picked up on that very fully. And he says that people, who develop **life-projects** like that, are actually **deceiving themselves**, but they are not aware of deceiving themselves. There's a blindness in them, and the result of doing it, is a **solitariness** in that deception. One of the consequences of being fooled inside yourself, and putting yourself on your own, is that you develop a **power-drive** to achieve your goals, irrespective of whoever or whatever, and, when you do that, you can't relate to anybody. You are outside the universe. You are outside of God.

I think there is a good deal of human experience that would support that one.

And he says, if you pull those three things together – **self-deception, solitariness and power-drive** – you've got the **root of all suffering in the world,** because those three things together cause **frustration** and **alienation** in the people who do them, and they cause a lot of **hurt** to everybody who gets in the way. And he says, that's **the real world.** He also says that that **suffering** is naturally described in **apocalyptic terms.** It looks absolute and total and universal. You naturally fall back on language like 'death' to describe it. For example, you may get yourself into some project that you are determined to succeed in, no matter what, and you're virtually killing everyone else in your path, who is proving an obstacle to you. Well you've probably lived with people like that, and you know what I'm talking about. But it's an extremely accurate way of describing what's wrong with the world.

Now, he would say, that in contrast, **life is a free gift**, not the result of a project.

Burrell says we should **live by a call or a vocation**, **not by an ambition or a project,** and he thinks there's an enormous difference. He suggests that we don't try and get up each day and try to create a perfect world, in which we can then do something. He suggests that **we stop trying to be the creator ourselves** in that sense, but

act with **gratitude** for the world we are actually given, and that we do live in. And let's **do what we can gratefully** within it.

There's an awful lot of mature wisdom in this sort of statement. He says, if you opt to live like that, you have some chance of living this sort of justice; that the main blockage to living that sort of justice is **life-projects**, irrespective of….and he says**, if you opt to live without those life-projects irrespective of,** and practise any sort of justice, or move towards it, **you will suffer** from project people, who will walk all over you. But, he says, that's inevitable and it's a by-product and it's the nature of the case.

Burrell then reflects on the whole **story of Jesus** – with much the same background we've been talking about – concretely – with Jesus making an option for the little people and getting chopped as a result. But, he says, you've got to remember that **even Jesus couldn't fix the world by a project**. Projects don't fix anything. So Jesus didn't have one, and **Jesus didn't even have a project to redeem the world**, because he knew that that wouldn't fix anything. It would only aggravate the problems of the world.

Jesus had no such mission, no such calling. He simply lived in **total gratitude and total openness**, within the givenness around him, and, in that way, he was capable of being totally **radically just to everyone** around him. As a result, he suffered from people, who had ambition projects, like the Roman Emperor, and Annas and Caiaphas, and other such characters. And that's what "done him in!"

This is one of the very original thoughts of Burrell which really spoke to me: his saying that Jesus didn't have a project to redeem the world, nor a mission nor a vocation nor whatever, to do that. But Jesus just became **the real Jesus** when he **gave up having projects** like those we've been talking about**.**

I think there's a lot of actual earthy truth in this, and that the **holiness of Jesus** is actually the fact that **he put no ambition-blocks in the way of gratitude for the free gift** that was open in justice to all.

The gift is vested in creation, and will emerge and express itself, when the blocks are not there, as it did in the **Galilean ministry** and the **kingdom of God** and its blossoming. As it did at **Easter**, when there were no blocks, even in death, put against the eruption of life.

It's enormously demanding of people. I mean, **management by objectives** goes down the track a bit, doesn't it, as being a pagan notion, as being not the Jewish God and not the Jewish Jesus.

Burrell is not trying to say we shouldn't have energy. He is trying to say we should! But it should be **energy and initiative in the cause of this kind of justice**. He's saying that we are called to live this new justice in a world that does not live it or even understand it. There is then a **conflictual situation** between those so called – those participating in the gift, - and the actual world made up of people who conceive life-projects irrespective of the God–giving. This will mean **suffering** for the former.

The **'duty in God's justice',** that lies on those so called, is not to expose this conflict nor fight it and eliminate it, but **to do with it what God did with the original problem of sin**. That is, to use it as **a new occasion to thanks to God for the Bounty**, and to do so in an outstandingly transcendent way, in the way of incarnation.

This is what is meant by **'bearing' the suffering**. It means entering into solidarity with those who suffer, because of defective and sinful human systems. It means continuing to, as befits God-people in the face of suffering. The suffering becomes a new occasion to renew (i.e. to make new) the quality of the response.

We do **not** then have **a spirituality of the 'cross' or of 'suffering'** as such, but of honest, consistent, faithful and now re-new-ed, amplified, and undaunted **gratitude**.

[There is no redemptive significance in suffering itself; oppression and crucifixion as such are neither liberative nor redemptive; suffering is a historical consequence of the conflict of values between those who know and respond to the God-dimension of life, and the world, that is violently acquisitive of its 'rights'. Genuine martyrdom is suffered but unsought.]

Oscar Romero echoed this thinking when he said: *"If there is hope for a new world, of a new nation, of a more just order, of a reflection of God's kingdom in our society, brothers and sisters, surely you are the Christians who*

will bring about this wonder of a new world – but only when we all are really communicators of the life that we come to receive in the eucharist."

And Augustine commented: " It *is good for me to be very near to God."*

The second author I mentioned is **Norris Clarke.** He has a book called The One and the Many, published in 2001. He has taught at Fordham nearly all his life in philosophy, and he branches into theology at the same time.

He has come up with some interesting extras to David Burrell's ideas. I think he would fundamentally agree with Burrell. He too is a man who thinks basically from the mystery of creation, and from everything that creation implies. He has made a couple of interesting comments. One is, that you talk about the **cause of evil**, and he says **evil doesn't really have a cause**. It's a negative by-product or a side-effect of persons doing some good action. Strictly speaking, we don't **do** evil – it's the side effects from the things we do. **Evil is an exclusion of something that ought to be there**. That is an interesting introduction, and then he says that God has put us in the world as in a kind of **theatre**, and in that theatre, where we act out our lives, there is a chance not only of evil happening, but of **us 'doing' evil as a side-effect**, and that's **the risk that God takes**…that we might do good, and we might do evil, and that God has put his money on us to do good rather than evil.

Now, he says that the only way that we can actually do evil, is by self-induced blindness and closedness – this is getting close to Burrell's idea really, and he says: "Well, what are the odds that we will get into that self-induced blindness and closedness?" And he says not 50-50. The **odds are stacked in our favour** rather than against us, and that is why he wants to say that " in his terms, **God has taken a vow of non-violence to us**". He says the implication is that we should take a vow of non-violence to God and non-violence to everybody else.

And, if we do that naturally, in a **natural gratitude** for God being like that, the chances are very much in our favour. He believes we will do good and not evil, and we'll say "yes" to God's original plan rather than "no", and set it up in our own way. But it's only an alternative expression of the same idea, I would feel, and again I think an extraordinarily beautiful one.

This is **justice in practice**, in real living – but it implies:

- that **God trusts us**, at a level we would never have dared to believe;
- that we are entitled to **trust one another** at a level where we would never have thought as appropriate,
- and **relationship** becomes incredibly possible, which is no longer a relationship based on a power drive. It's a relationship based on openness in the same sort of a way. He is sort of saying the same thing.

Raimund Schwager is an Austrian Jesuit. He has a book called Jesus in the Drama of Salvation, 1999. He is very much a pupil of Rene Girard, the French philosopher, who has spent his life speaking about **scape-goats** and what scape-goating really means. He says that the whole mystery of justice-living in Jesus and in us is fundamentally a **freedom from violence**. Clarke hasn't got the idea of God's vow of non-violence from him, but they just happen to be converging in the same direction. And he says that really, in practice, to live this justice-life is to live a **freedom from retaliation**. Don't retaliate, either to God or to anybody else. And I suppose it's back to where we were – **no revenge** against anybody. It's like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, when you come down to it, in many ways. But he's just putting his emphasis on that particular angle.

Tom Weinandy is an American Capuchin priest, who studies and teaches in Oxford. He had a book out in 2000 from Edinburgh, Does God Suffer? He said there's a point at which the project - in the bad sense of the word 'project' - of **negativity in the human race** came to an ultimate collapse, and he said that Jesus stood at that point, and that it was really the **Holy Saturday of all human history**, when everything went utterly phut. And Jesus opted to stand there and let it all fall on him. And that's really Good Friday and Holy Saturday. But, he added, the mystery and paradox of it is that, when **Jesus** let it all go phut around him, at that point he was standing at the point of **perfect peace in all creation**, which the entire project of humanity could not radically take away. I think it's a beautiful meditation on the whole Paschal Mystery, Death/ Resurrection, in other terms. And, that in that sense, Jesus, through what he did on Calvary, merited the peace and beauty of Easter and Resurrection.

If you go along with him, I think he is giving you a door back into the use of **apocalyptic language** and **redemption language**. I think that's what he is trying to do. The others are not so committed to using that language and I'm certainly not. I would prefer to say: "Well, if the language is so ambivalent, ditch it, and start from scratch and say what you mean." Whereas, he is more inclined to say: "Let's salvage the language, and I'm giving you a life-line to do so." I don't think he is actually saying anything contradictory to the others, or trying to refute them.

John Milbank is the last of the authors I want to discuss. He is an Anglican, from Cambridge, and he's been the leader and the spark in an enormously interesting revival of theology at Cambridge. It has been one of the major theological events of the last ten years, I think, anywhere in the world, but it's a deliberate attempt to **criticize modernity**, and to say there are better ways of understanding life than the modernity track. He is fundamentally **an Augustinian** and he doesn't regard Augustine as entirely a bad word. He has re-read Augustine and tried to get out of Augustine **a sense of transcendence**, and a sense of the sacred, that he has a great fear may well have been lost.

But when he comes to all of this, he doesn't go quite as far as the others. I find it interesting that, despite everything you can say against the Catholic Church, that the **Catholic thinkers have a freedom** in this regard, that others don't quite seem to have. But he sort of suggests that, when persons do evil acts, they cut themselves off from social peace. Well, everybody would go along with that, and that means that persons are then visited by social anger. But the aim should be to **reduce that anger to a calm fury against the sin**, and to offer the sinner nothing but goodwill, so bringing them to the point of realizing that their isolation is self-imposed.

So he is saying what the others have said, but I don't think it is being said with the same strength of conviction as the others say it. But I thought I'd put it in as an interesting little perspective set-up in the whole thing.

So, if you look at all of that, well, it's interesting. If you say, **how** do you **live the justice vision of at-one-ment?**

- **Burrell** is saying "give up life projects irrespective of";
- **Clarke** is saying "try a vow of non-violence to everybody, including God";
- **Schwager** is saying "don't retaliate";
- **Tom Weinandy** is saying "start at the point where the whole thing collapses around you, and you'll find you are standing at a peace point";
- **Milbank** is saying "Don't get shirty and negative about it all, and calm down the fury, and you might find peace under it".

They are saying very similar things, that are worth pondering, but I don't think any of them would die for their formulas. And they are saying: "Well, what do you reckon and how would you put it?"

But we've got to find some way of saying **how we'd live**, if we believe in this larger justice thing, and then **put into practice covenant**, **redemption, sacrifice, expiation**, **reconciliation**. Then we've got **an at-one-ment model** that is not the atonement model.

What comes through with all of them - and it may be the basis of their seeming like that, - is that they have actually been game enough to **tackle the prevailing model** and to say that **"life-projects irrespective of" are not good enough**. They are trying to **make people think again**, by quietly saying something that is totally out of kilter with the expectations about.

I don't think you can do that, without seeming to assume to know; but they are not assuming to know; **they are assuming to question.**

Actually these fellows are typical of **something is smelling different** in the last 5 – 10 years. It's not a "let's do updating" any more. It's not "let's criticize the prevailing model", and all of that. It's more **a classic contemplative approach.** "Contemplative" is not the best word to use, because it sounds too pious. If we could have **a non-pious contemplative approach** to the reality, that is what they are more into. It comes through as critical, because the prevailing models until then weren't all that contemplative. However, there's **a new mood**

around. S**omething different** is actually happening on a number of fronts, and this can be seen more in philosophy departments than in theology departments. The theologians were trained about 10-15 years back, and they are still acting the way they were trained, which is a more critical way.

But these scholars, who are actually taking us somewhere, are the kind of people who no longer have very strong official positions in the universities. They've got time to **think,** and the thinking is in a different mood. That's what they are contributing.

They are **not in the business of preserving anything**. They are in the business of saying "Let's get in touch with the *dearest freshness deep down things*". It's not just the men either. It's **Catherine Pickstock** in Cambridge who is doing even more than these people and is perhaps being heard at a wider level. She is a pupil of Milbank, and you can heard Milbank's influence coming through in her work.

The feel is different around at the moment. I think it's **more the at-one-ment feeling** than the atonement.

In all this**,** there is really room for a very interesting **dialogue with the Asian religions**, especially the Buddhists. You never quite know where the next paradigms are going to come from. I don't think they have come yet.

None of what these people are saying is **in the post-modernist vein** at all. There's no primary intention of critique, and there's no primary negativity. There's a sort healthy understanding of being fairly **happy with life** in a lot of discussions, which is different.

These scholars are saying that we are **all participants in an ensemble together**, like *the one in the many.* Therefore we can't really do anything without an appropriate awareness of other people around us, who are participating in the world, in which we are doing something. That's an enormously healthy basis for a **common** tackling of issues that are common to all of us, rather than some of us trying to decide to fix the problems for others. I think that would be the way they'd see it really.

Those who follow **Weinandy** in using the Holy Saturday metaphor are largely influenced by **Von Balthasar** for whom it was almost the central image. There are lots of others, like several of those just quoted, who don't like the Holy Saturday image, though they are talking the same dynamic. It's different in John's Gospel, which doesn't include Holy Saturday at all. Many would think that's a healthier approach than the Holy Saturday one. We set a track to work on, but we are coming to the same central point. I think Von Balthasar can be very expressive of that. That might be one of the next steps.

A German (Tubingen) school of exegesis has spelt this out recently.[26]

In this, there is a concept of justice that governs the relationships between God and humanity, indeed between God and sinful humanity. Those relationships are unique, and they come down to the mystery of God and the mystery of creation. We need to assert that God as God needs nothing. There is as a result no compulsion within or upon God to do anything (especially to redeem us from sin). When God freely creates, God **acts out of bounty**. God intends full participatory communion with God for the human persons God chooses to create. This bounty is at root inexplicable, it is the mystery of God. It can be called justice – the justice of God – because in a profound sense **God is bound to be thus bountiful by God's own bounty.** [Bonum diffusivum sui.]

Further, on the same principles, God's dignity (or 'honour') is not diminished by human insurgence. That is not what sin does. Rather, sin sets up an absence of humanity from God's original plan, in creation, of full participatory communion with God (in charity, humility, and active obedience). **Sin is a privation of the Bounty for us.**

[26] Richard Bell, Sacrifice and Christology in Paul, Journal of Theological Studies (Oxford), 2002, April, 1-27. [This article uses the Tubingen 'school' – Gese, Janowski, Stuhlmacher, Hosius – in interpretation of atonement in Paul.] They follow H.Gese's essay, 'Die Suhne', Zur biblischen Theologie, Tubingen, 1977 (1989) ET K.Crim Atonement, Essays in biblical theology, Augsburg 1981.

So when sin has occurred, God freely refuses to allow the sin to interfere with the original plan of his creation. He refuses to hold the sin against sinful humanity. Instead, in virtue of the same principle of bounty and of the justice of God, ***God uses the sin as an occasion for more bounty****, or better, for* ***an unbroken continuation of the bounty and a transcendent amplification of it.*** *God reinstantiates the Gift and the donation continues. It is a recapitulation of the original act, now made more visibly wonderful by the bountiful use of the new occasion. In this way God enables sinful humanity to return to its Creative Source; God draws it back into the original movement of divine love.*

You could call the justice of God, now, ***a restorative or recapitulative justice*** *of God and of creation. This justice is a principle of unity and cooperation and solidarity between redeemed humanity and the redeeming God. This is why, I think, there is a formal identification in God between* ***justice and mercy****: mercy is not a compassion that moves God to 'let someone off' the strict demands of justice – it is another word for the different kind of justice that God is 'bound to' in his Bounty.*

But there is more to it yet. God freely enacts his 'justice' by sending his Son to become man. It is in Jesus the man that all this takes place. And because Jesus the man is God's Own Son, there is henceforth in humanity ***someone who will not and cannot withdraw from the full participatory communion with God in love.*** *It is in Christ that it all' holds up' forever..*

It is true that Jesus lived as an advocate for the Justice of God. But not primarily at least for the distributive justice of God. Rather for his bountiful justice. Sometimes writers suggest that Jesus wanted to re-distribute the land, or at least its benefits, among the Jewish people to whom God originally gave them. That is true, if it is understood in terms of God's bounty, but it is not true enough if understood in terms of God as above all as a supremely ethical human Distributor. (Those who talk that way have to fall back on a mystery within God that is the secret of the distribution.) That is also the trouble with advocates of an equality of distribution – the land was not equally distributed by God among the 12 tribes: to speak of a discipleship of equals around Jesus seems to come from modern democatic models. It is rather an invitation into the all-inclusive largesse of God that Jesus gives.

There is still more. ***Jesus has lived the principles of participatory communion and recapitulated bounty****. As a result, the world he lived in, which opposed those principles, did away with him. That is why they killed him. But he passed through that death into immortal life and resurrection. This means that* ***that world can do nothing more to him.*** *This means that the participatory communion of humanity with and in God will truly last forever. And that that world itself has – despite itself – through Jesus's resurrection, been confirmed into its own transfiguration.*[27]

This cannot take place without a vocation of restored humanity to live by the same principles as God, and as Jesus. This means that ***in humanity now, justice is 'formed' by faith-hope-charity in a theologal way****, and becomes different as a result. The symbols of this are the incarnation and the resurrection, which together are the transfiguration and re-novation of our present world.*

The logic of all this leads to gratitude. ***Gratitude to this God, and this living Bounty. Gratitude expressed through Jesus.*** *There has to be a dimension of 'worship' in this gratitude, but it is not ordinary worship, it is worship of the Bounty given and re-given and 'forevered' in Jesus. The act of gratitude is a re-giving of the thanks of the creature for God's refusal to allow even sin to interfere with the intentional point of creating. This is what Eucharist really means. It is a celebration of the indefectibility of real presence.*

We are called to live this new justice in a world that does not live it or even understand it. There is then **a conflictual situation** between those so called, and the actual world. This will mean **suffering** for the former.

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[27] There is a point at which the whole project of negativity of the human race collapses.
Jesus stood at that point – the 'Holy Saturday' point of the universe.
He offered himself as the recipient of all that negativity.
He became – paradoxically - the recipient of the undestroyed peace and beauty of the universe... of the dawn of the Easter Kingdom.
He merited this by the freedom and openness of his stance in death on the cross.
In this way, you can keep – if you wish – the language of redemption.
T.Weinandy, supra.

The 'duty in God's justice' that lies on them, is not to sublimate this conflict in favour of a negotiated settlement, nor to expose it, fight it, and eliminate it, but to do with it what God did with the original problem of sin. That is, to **use it as a new occasion to give participatory communional thanks to God for the Bounty, and to do so in an outstandingly transcendent way, in the way of incarnation..** This is what is meant by **'bearing'** the suffering. It means entering into solidarity with those who suffer because of defective and sinful human systems. It means continuing to act as befits God-people in the face of suffering. The suffering becomes a new occasion to renew (i.e. to make new) the quality of the response.

We do not then have a spirituality of the 'cross' or of 'suffering' as such but of honest, consistent, faithful, and now re-new-ed, amplified, recapitulated and undaunted gratitude. There is no redemptive significance in suffering itself; oppression and crucifixion as such are neither liberative nor redemptive; suffering is a contingent, historical consequence of the conflict of values between those who know and respond to the God-dimension of life and the world that is violently acquisitive of its 'rights'. Genuine martyrdom is suffered, but unsought.

We often speak of Jesus 'taking our place'. This is not simple substitution, as if God punished Jesus instead of punishing us. It is **identification.** It is identification with us in our sinful existence. Jesus did commit sins himself, but fully participated in a humanity where a sinful existence was inevitable. He was made 'one of the sinners'. That is why his offering of gratitude and communion to the Father was truly a 'sinners' offering'. It was different from the offering of animals in the temple – they did not participate in the sinful existence of humans.

It would be right to call this 'place-taking' (Stellvertretung) **inclusive**, not exclusive. That is why we can say that God was in Christ, reconciling the (sinful) world itself to Godself. The reconciliation does not take place unless he is one of us. In this role, only he, and no one else, could stand in our place.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (the inclusive communion). God publicly set forth Jesus Christ as a mercy seat (a presence of God to us, a 'location' of the given recapitulated finalised donation of the Bounty) – i.e. as the manifestation of this very new kind of 'justice'. This can only be perceived through faith (a faith of an unusual kind, that grasps the magnitude of the Gift...and responds gratefully by living the Gifting). All this has come about through his death (his blood), which occurred as God sees it for the establishing and proclaiming of this new Justice. Included in it all is the 'passing over' of former sins (they no longer 'matter') – it is as if God has impatiently waited for this moment (and as a result done nothing about the former sins until they could be dealt with like this.) As a result the group of believers in the Gift form a new sanctuary, or new place where the 'Mercy Seat' can be set up, in and with Christ. [28]

There is a full unity of action of God and of Jesus here. It is not one over and against the other. A theology of atonement by martyrdom is not pertinent. It is not <u>do ut des</u>, it is rather <u>do quia dedisti</u>.

The wisdom tradition in Israel is linked with creation in this sense, and also with cult in this sense. This Christology seems to come out of it.

Y.Labbe has reflected on the theological implications of this.

In a trinitarian Christology, we see God against, with, and beyond suffering.

God is <u>against</u> suffering because God is an excess of givenness to us. Being is given to itself, and in grace, is regiven to itself, but only because the God of creation and grace <u>is</u> *an excess of givenness.* Our own being is simply a share in this givenness. Suffering comes from a contradiction between self and its own self, self and other selves, self and world. God is *an excess of reconciliation of all of these separations.* In Christian faith, this excess of givenness and reconciliation is called the Holy Spirit. It is not an explanation of or compensation for suffering, it is rather **an overwhelming of suffering in a positive excess.**

God is <u>with</u> suffering, in the cross of Jesus Christ. That suffering is inexpressible, and even it could be expressed, we are as it were forbidden to express it. God suffers. It is a saying-down of God, a paradox that amounts to a contradiction, a scandal. What is invisible in God is made visible, but as it were wrongly. It is like a

[28] cf. Rom. 3,25-26.

manifestation of separation between God and God. *Strangely, this means that* ***this God of the cross is present to every form of separation and contradiction in our world, is with every form of evil that we know. But only to transform it.*** Evil that we know is an internal separation between being and language, between subject and discourse, between existence that makes sense and existence that does not make sense.

God is beyond suffering, as God the Father. Beyond the excess of Spirit, beyond the crucifixion of Jesus, an absolute freedom arises within God *as* ***God arises within God***. This is a reality of God beyond the whole problematic of evil. In this freedom, God knows how to love himself and us.

It is really hard to find words for the kind of justice that obtains in a *love relationship* of *friendship* between man and God. It is not the justice of an inferior with a superior, nor is it the justice (called 'commutative' justice) that governs the relationships between human equals. Some might be tempted to call it general justice, the sort of justice that governs the good order of the universe. Even that is not quite enough. The noblesse oblige of the love relationship that God initiates with a human person has its ***origins in the creative act itself***. There God as it were desires to constitute another person with whom God can have a divine personal communion, not as superior to inferior but as person to person. If there is justice here, it is justice that obtains between (divine) persons. The mystery, which is forever beyond explanation, is that the human person has been created and elevated by grace to be a person that a divine Person can, and in a mysterious sense, 'must' love on equal personal terms. And the human person is someone who can as it were rejoice in given 'divine rights' in the presence of God, someone who is bound by the same kind of justice to live up to them.....The satisfaction or atonement model, at least as it is usually presented, sells this mystery very short.

7. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REDEMPTION

Psychological considerations.

Anyone versed in a psychoanalytic way of thinking will immediately have suspicions about the language and the dominant metaphors of 'atonement' or 'satisfaction' theory. [29] The scenario, as presented, is that of trying to kill God

[29] Very much could be said here, and I will give only a few brief points. [Cf. three papers written for Fordham University graduate courses, in 1990-1991, on the Theology of Redemption : 'Oedipus', 'Satisfaction, justice and mercy', and 'The inner need to

(sin) and being justly killed by an offended God; it is that of attempts to achieve a true equation of infinities (in offence, and in reparation); it is a focus on a closed circuit of relationships which is perfect, static, and in need of restoration. This God is at root the Lord of our life by being the Lord of our guilt. The psychological suspicions to which this language and set of images gives rise, is about someone who has not adequately resolved the Oedipus complex. He is still struggling for an unachieved equality with a Superior Parent, with whom there is not yet a truly mature relationship, as of adult to adult. There is an apparent advocacy of dependency, which will keep the human subordinate to God, and always in a state of unhappy inferiority.

In the satisfaction theory, God is said to 'do' a number of things. God offers love, permits fault, then turns away, and perhaps forgives, and returns in mercy, but places a definitive end to this continuum (at the moment of death). God seems never to be a full participant in the process of relating. The human being in this relationship with God is also said to 'do' a number of things. He receives God's love, refuses it, injures-insults-offends God, turns rather to creaturely interests and self-interest, excessively elevates himself to a position of importance, disrupts the expected order of things, is accordingly banished from God (or banishes himself), and is expected to repair the damage. He is perpetually so dominated by the figure of this God that he never gets past a certain overwhelmedness. He is always working either against or in accord with the Rules of the Other, and he knows that Other only in terms of those Rules. These are all real indications of a relationship in which the Oedipus complex has not been resolved.

It could be objected that there is always a real justice needed in any loving relationship. True. The question is, what kind of justice. The objection, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, is that in the satisfaction theory it is assumed to be the justice that obtains between an inferior and a Superior. To elevate such a justice into a place of preeminence in our lives, is to keep ourselves fixated at a pre-Oedipal-resolution stage of our development, and is not in the interests of our true humanness. Theologians who have learnt something from psychoanalysis might also wonder if it is in the interests of an authentic understanding of the real God.

It is hard to find words for the kind of justice that truly obtains in a love relationship between man and the real God. It is not the justice of an inferior to a Superior, nor is it the justice (called 'commutative' justice) that governs the relationships between human equals. Some might be tempted to call it a kind of 'general' justice, that regulates the good order of the finite universe. But even that is not quite enough. The 'noblesse oblige' of the love-relationship which God initiates with a human person has its roots in the creative act itself. In that act, the divine intentionality is so strong, that God, as it were, desires to constitute another person with whom God can have personal communion, not as Superior to inferior, but rather as Person to Person. If there is a justice here, it is that justice that obtains between divine Persons : the mystery, which can never be explained, is that the human person has been created (and elevated by grace) to be a person that a divine Person loves on equal Personal terms. The satisfaction theory does no kind of real justice to that mystery. It sells the mystery of the human person very short indeed.

It is interesting to note that when a system is assumed, in which relationship breakdown can occur, it probably will. Is the real 'sin' then rather in the advocacy of an inadequate kind of human justice in our relationship with God, than in the de facto breakdowns of this kind of rapport, which we normally call our 'sins' ?

There is, however, from a psychoanalytic point of view, a deceptive and seductive dimension of satisfaction theory. It insists on a defusing of the self-centredness of the human person. That is a very positive thing, but in the theory a self-destructiveness that is presented like that, it is blurred with the openness of the self, in love, towards and for another person. In this second approach, the value of the diminution of the self lies in the love for the other, not in itself. There is a subtle blend of altruism and masochism at work here, all, of course, for 'religious' purposes. Self-loss in itself is not a good thing : when it is a loss of self-exclusiveness for the sake of the inclusion of the other, it is, through love, a good thing.

Psychoanalysis would also detect in satisfaction theory a good deal of data that comes, more deeply, from the oral stage of human development. There the agenda is largely that of progressive separation from an original symbiosis. The first attempts at separation from the mother are usually accompanied with a deep (unconscious) guilt, and give rise to immediate and spontaneous felt needs for reparation to the mother. In that sense, the primordial roots of all guilt experiences are in relation to the mother, not the father. [The Oedipal stage will refocus them on the

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make reparation'. To them I would now want add the psychological framework due to Wilfred Bion, and Neville Symington, of the Tavistock Institute, London, in their critique of narcissism.]

father, but have already a lot to work on.] The satisfaction would seem, in its absolute insistence on reparation, to hold the person at a primitive oral stage of development, which is not fully worked through, and in which full separation from symbiosis into distinct personhood has not been achieved.

Narcissism is seen by many analysts today as central to the whole psychological question. Therapy is at root an invitation to let go of a primary interest in the self, and open up to the reality and difference of the other. Guilt itself, and attempts to remove it, are syndromes that often feed a sense of narcissistic perfection. The entire attempt at perfect or condign satisfaction could well be, from a psychological point of view, a way of being the greatest, if not in innocence, at least in repentance. Perhaps the deepest criticism of satisfaction theory may well be the consideration that it protects the narcissism of the person making satisfaction, rather than healing it or transforming it.[30]

The questions which psychology would ask, then, concern the amount of openness to full personal growth that the satisfaction theory promotes. Theologians working in this perspective would ask their own questions about the authenticity of the concept of God that emerges from such positions.

Similar critiques would be made of the mentality of penance, compunction, sacrifice, and expiation, as should be clear from the above.

C.Duquoc has offered considerable light here. [31] His short but very rich contribution is not intended to be part of 'historical' Jesus study. It is a theologian's informed comment on a collection of essays on psychoanalytic matters. It amounts to a critique of redemption thinking, in the light of the (central) psychoanalytic topic of transference and counter-transference.

In transference, there is a substitution of someone (the analyst) for a parental figure: he/she is at least the doctor who is supposed to know what is wrong with the analysand. The analyst is a substitute for a fantasy of the perfect healer. This event of substitution re-activates primary (parental) relationships. Therapy is the delicate art of doing so in such a way that there is distance from what originally blocked personal growth in these relationships; that is, in such a way that there can now be an openness to communication through them. This happens through the analyst, who is a kind of 'substitute'.

In Anselm's juridic rationalisation of redemption, God's attitude is like that of an irrational parent: there is, in this God, a conflict between anger and love, in regard to humanity. This perception of God is transferential: it is a projection of unresolved psychic conflict in us.

In Jesus, we have a double substitution: Jesus is substituted for God, and Jesus is substituted for humanity.

Jesus is substituted for God, in so far as his lot is that given to God in the (imaginary) logic and phantasm of sin: the sinner would kill God, and kills Jesus instead. But Jesus' non-violent acceptance of this death opens a breach in the fantasy. Jesus, by accepting death like this, shows that the real God is other than the way God is felt to be in unresolved psychic conflicts. He unveils this false God as stupid and destructive and immoral. In doing this, Jesus stands in the place the false God held, but reveals the true God.

In retrosect, you could say that in his whole life, Jesus has tried by word and deed to master the transference that serves this false God. It took his death (as well as his life) to achieve the resolution of the

[30] See Neville Symington, The making of a psychotherapist, London (Karnac Books), 1996; see also my Functions and Disfunctions of the idea of sin, a paper prepared for a Fordham University graduate course, 1990, and later published in Dublin, in the Festschrift for Sean O'Riordan, CSSR.

[31] C.Duquoc, Jesus therapeute?, Revue d'ethique et de theologie morale, Dec.2000, 119-133.

transference. The 'opponent' of Jesus is not so much the totalitarianism of Rome, as the transferential absoluteness of the false God. In fact, the Roman situation was historically the one that revealed this much larger problem.

Jesus is also substituted for humanity, in so far as he undergoes, so to speak, the anger perceived in God within the transference, and, by suffering it much like an analyst does, disarms it and the transference. He thus exposes the fact that that sort of God is an infantile projection, falsely endowed with a juridic function.

> The classic Freudian psychoanalytic doctrine insists on the neutrality of the analyst in order to make the transference come to the surface, and resolve it. The analyst must then deal with his/her own counter-transference and remove it from the therapy. Recently, a number of woman analysts, and in particular Julia Kristeva, have disagreed with this as a principle. They have noted the positive role of feminine and indeed maternal affect in transference resolution.

Duquoc sees here a possibility of positively appreciating the compassion of Jesus for all those locked into the guilt transference that gives them a false God. Jesus, in doing his substitutive-healing of guilt, positively uses his own compassion for those locked into false guilt.

Perhaps there is even more: at the very point at which this transference is resolved, there is not a (secular) neutrality, but an awareness or indeed a revelation of a God who is not neutral but infinitely positive to humanity, in the divine justice of love. Perhaps real revelation only occurs to those who have known how to resolve this transference?
Since this moment of resolution of the transference is the moment of Calvary, it could be linked with the gift of the Spirit from the crucified.

Some years ago, Elaine Scarry explored the phenomenology of pain, in terms of the unmaking and re-making of one's 'world'. Her assumption was that pain was a mental event. Pain is an opinion on the organism's state of health. [32]

There are limits to the linguistic expression of these experiences. They seem to elude language, and perhaps are deeper than language. [It is interesting to observe how often the language people use to express them is metaphorical, and visual-metaphorical.]

Recently, Ariel Glucklich has taken the idea much further, through the use of some ideas from neuroscience (mainly from Melzack). His method is to found any phenomenological insights on that neuroscience.

The basis of the approach is 'Gate Control theory'. Pain is registered in the brain. But there is a mechanism in the spinal cord that controls the flow of neuronal stimuli from the body's periphery to the brain. This flow includes the flow of two kinds of endogenous opiates (that tend to suppress the sense of pain) and some beta-endorphins (that enhance a temporary euphoria). As a result, there is in the brain a fundamental anatomical structure, a sentient neural hub, that is called the 'Neurosignature' or 'Neuromatrix'. It is the basic system that channels information that leads to pleasure or pain. It has inputs and outputs.

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[32] Ariel Glucklich, Sacred Pain and the Phenomenal Self, Harvard Theological Review, 91:4 (1998) 389-412. Ariel Glucklich, Self and Sacrifice: A Phenomenological Psychology of Sacred Pain, Harvard Theological Review, 92:4 (1999) 479-506. Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain, the making and unmakingof the world, Oxford University Press, 1985. Ronald Melzack, Phantom-Limb and the Brain, in Burkhart Bromm and John E.Desmedt, eds., Pain and the Brain: from Nociception to Cognition, New York, Raven, 1995.

In the absence of (appropriate levels of) stimulation (or incoming neuronal signals), this Neurosignature overfires and creates images 'as' real: the result is hallucination. Phantom pain is a good example. It is a psychogenic event with somatic manifestations.In an overload of such stimulation, the Neurosignature 'underfires' and the result is a state of 'dis-hallucination. [Hence the importance of what might be termed an appropriate level of stimulation.]

Derived from the Neurosignature, there is the Body-Self Template, the neurophysiological basis of the phenomenal self. [Gestalt psychology is akin to this.] [In phenomenology, it is not far from Merleau-Ponty.]

One of its main functions is centralisation of stimuli, for a purpose, 'telic centralisation'.
A telos is a systemic goal.

When overstimulation occurs, it eradicates this telic-centralising function of the Body-Self Template, and the self becomes transparent and subservient to the experience of pain. When understimulation occurs, a different kind of exposure to uncontrolled and uncentralised stimulus-experience (and pain) can occur.

Derived from the Body-Self Template, there is a series of phenomenological realities: the body-schema; the body-self (or, a pre-reflective sense of one's own body); the mirrored body (in Lacan's sense); and an integrated and unified sense of the body-being that knows the difference between what is 'just so' and what is 'as though', and moves (in telic centralisation) towards the former. It is through this last that changes in body-states (which in themselves are dispersed and flexible) at the root of the body-image must be coordinated and regulated. This centralising unifier contributes to culture, and culture contributes to it. It is isomorphic with the Body-Self Template. It functions as a system of sub-systems.

Ego is an emergent property from this bioneurological organisation, and is isomorphic with it. Ego is one telos towards which centralisation occurs. It need not be the only one. Ego ought not be envisaged as a 'little man in the head', and is not in absolute command, and does not function exclusively by making decisions. It is more like a steering mechanism (cybernetic).

Pain can be looked at within this entire system, and its purpose. Pain is the psychic manifestation of telic decentralisation. It is isomorphic with the psychological, physiological, and organic processes of loss. It changes the perception of the Body-Self Template, and so of the ego. It can be extreme enough to induce 'ego-loss'.

The ego with its sub-systems can assume a higher telos than its own, towards which its centralising functions are then directed. What they were doing for the ego is then encompassed in what they do for the higher telos. It could be called, from one point of view, a transegoic passage. This implies pain (and with it, the sense of loss). In this process, there is an emergent sense of a different kind of 'self', and a new identification. Depending on cultural factors, this identification can consciously be with a 'more powerful version of the ego' or with some cultural or religious figure that has been revered. It is beyond the data, in the method here being used, to claim that it is identification with a 'Deeper Self (in the Jungian sense) or with a 'Dynamic Ground' (in the sense of Transpersonal Psychology).

It would be interesting to ask how this would apply to Jesus. The direction to the higher telos, yes. The transegoic passage, too. Probably more. There is not a new identification, I think, but rather a continuing experience of in-istence in a world that demands passages. The character of such passage in Jesus is the psychological sign of the outreach of his love for others?

In many instances, it is identification with an 'aggressor' who previously used 'tools of aggression' against the body-ego to cause it pain, that is, who previously caused telic decentralisation. [See Melanie Klein here.] [This can be a case of responding to guilt induced by factors embedded in the superego's relation to the ego. It can also be a case of trying to strengthen a depleted self.] This is often identification with a parent.

The manner in which the parent did this can be understood as a withholding of feedback, the result of which was a defect in ego-nurturing. Feedback is here understood as including and depending upon neurological stimulation that is appropriate to the whole system. It is not merely verbal, or conceptual. The move towards ego-effacing or ego-transcending states is both a move towards a higher telic centralisation and a move towards a higher form of nurturing feedback.

Often this latter is sought and received from a therapist.

J.M. Garrigues has shown a link between such psychology and religious communication in art.

There is such a thing as *religious art.* It is always conditioned (by culture, and by history). It always runs the risk of being incomplete and overstated, in relation to the content of faith. It runs the risk of obscuring history and revelation. That is its occupational hazard. It can be useful to people, if the risk is countered by preaching and catechesis. For example, *Baroque Hispanic Art,* with its exacerbated expressionism, gave a message that only the reality of human pain mattered in the eyes of God. [Gibson is in this tradition.] For example, against this, a certain *Angelism* at the end of the 19th century gave 'divine' impressions of Christ and the Virgin; there were 'Neo-Sulpician' films about Jesus; in the late 70's Zeffirelli tried to balance it all, (but perhaps had an actor who continued this tradition). *Gibson* is a reaction to this, and goes back to the Hispanic style, but with very new touches. He uses an *aesthetic in which all must be explicit* without reserve or shame. (See his presentation of Satan, of the Resurrection as if in a photo, his use of private revelations). This relates to the cultural poverty of a generation of young Americans who have no sense of literature. They do not handle abstraction, and want a hyperrealism of the immediate and the concrete, as if it were a photo-collage. He works also in a field in which it is not possible to transpose the real mystery into 'good' images of the above kind. He *compensates* with sound effects and visuals, with decibels and sound waves. The result is that he offers something to be *submitted to rather than interiorised.* There is no distance permitted between the 'audience' ('participants' who have to feel what is going on) and what is presented. What is so presented is violence, shock, torture, cruelty, flogging beyond measure. He asks us to relate to this in a way very different from the way the first Christian writers did: no one in the early community was actually present at all the steps of the passion, or wrote about them like that. This amounts to *real manipulation* of the 'audience'. They are offered such a *supreme virtual illusion* that they are meant to this this is the way it was. To do this, he uses *conventional piety rather than, and often directly in opposition to, the historically known facts and the gospel texts.* Eg: the nailing of the hands, the full cross, the high cross. To do this, he uses material simplistically: the bad characters are nothing but bad (the bad thief has his eyes picked out by a crow), the earthquake after Jesus's death destroys the temple and much of Jerusalem. Judas is the bad guy (like the Judas of Spanish village theatre in Holy Week, hung in effigy.) To do this, he uses material that has been the launching pad of anti-Judaism: he even makes the Jews manufacture the cross! The Sanhedrin is evil… The underlying model in the plot is an *American style lynching.* There is no use of the gospels or of acquired historical study to control choice of data. Eg. The tunic shared…

This is *an aesthetics of cinematic immediacy,* highlighting what is sensed and felt passionately. It is a kind of dolorism. With a fetish for blood. It seems to convey the message that a certain enormous quantity of physical pain (and shed blood) were required by God to satisfy the debt of our sins. [In fact, others suffered more physical pain than Jesus. The value of Jesus' suffering comes from the dignity and innocence of his person, the source of his unique way of loving and freedom.] The flogging scene is properly speaking sadistic and obscene. This choice of medium is *not neutral*. It is a case of *demagogic opportunism.* It shows no respect for youth, and offers them no access to interiority, or to a true spirituality of the mystery of the passion.

At root, each significant event of each human life is 'unrepresentable'. We can only try, sometimes, to represent some possible aspects of the way it impinges on us. There are two basic ways of representing it:

a. by its existence-in-act as an influence on us now;
b. by artifice (i.e. by literary means).

In the second way, there are again two forms of representation:

a. as in ancient classic (Greek) tragedy (cf. Aristotle): the purpose is always catharsis, and no death or mutilation scenes were ever included

b. as in the 'theatre [33]of cruelty'[34] (cf. Antonin Artaud, 1896-1948):

[33] The beginnings of the theatre of cruelty are in the 16th and 17th cc to excite passions to galvanise the will to fight the infidels.
[34] Latin cruor = red blood that flows.

the purpose is not catharsis, but excitation, and there is hyper-realism.

In the tradition of the classic mode, there is Bach, Handel. In the tradition of the cruelty mode, there is Auschwitz, September 11th, etc., which try to 'show' the problem of evil without resolving it, and with the implication that the evil is in us: how could man do that to man?

Questions about Gibson's 'Passion' that ask is it as it was, or is it accurate, are secondary. The real and intended representation of the death of Jesus, is the Eucharist: do *this* as my representation. Harmonisation of four quite disparate texts was never intended.

The future of the theology of redemption ?

Pastoral considerations.

We have then two very, very different approaches to a 'theology of redemption'. One is Greek-Latin, western-European, coming out of a culture of the individual, in possession for more than a millenium. The other is Hebrew-Jesus, coming out of a culture of clan and village, sounding refreshingly new yet terrible different from what people have 'always' heard. They are presented, pastorally, to a present day culture, which is largely interested in neither ! [If it uses the word 'redemption', it probably thinks of redeeming frequent flyer points...] [Even if the present world is a 'market mindset' that measures values by prices, its large secularisation seems to prevent it from even being interested in a 'price theology' of supernatural redemption.]

Let us look at the old model. Unfortunately, it is not the result of divine revelation - it has no support in the scriptural sources. It is the human construction of ideas that come from a certain kind of culture (now in its decline), and assume certain levels of human development (now seen to be quite limited), and imply certain understandings of God (now seen to be at variance with the message of the scriptures and of Jesus). This model is likely to be identified by many good christians as the only one, and the limited levels of human development at which it holds people are assumed by them to be the right ones. There is a large political dimension in its use : it can easily keep people subordinate to existing authorities. To push it, then, would seem to indicate that that kind of subordination was held dearer than revealed truth or the possibilities of full personal development. I am sure that such considerations have not really occurred to those who push it.

Let us look at the new model, if we can call it that. In its biblical language, it is rooted in sets of cultural experience that are hardly possible for most people in the first world, at least, today. You would almost have to be living in the clan culture of ancient Galileean villages to understand it from the inside. We do not seem to have a contemporary cultural language to translate what it means, and so we of necessity tend to fall back on the accustomed words, like redemption, and expiation, for example, and try to give the words a new and different meaning. I do not think this will work. The language is so culturally and historically conditioned that the conditioning will overpower the intended different meaning. There is also a political factor : the preservation of these conditioned meanings is in the interests of the social establishment of the churches.

There is perhaps another way to go. A serious theology today is realising that the biblical set of images is translating profound insights into the God-human relationship that is the result of creation and grace. But that depth of understanding has not been reached by the people at large. It is impossible to presume it if you are trying to teach a better founded understanding of these things. And understanding comes in worldviews....

My growing sense is then that perhaps, like it or not, the language and the theme of 'redemption' as a primary governing concept has gone past its use-by date in christian theology and pastoral education. Without falling into other (and opposite) errors like New Age approaches or a 'Creation Spirituality', perhaps a renewed theology of creation (and grace) in the tradition of Aquinas, is needed.[35] It could give metaphysical (and even mystical)

[35] The ITC document on redemption notes the presence of many new approaches to the theme. The double spectrum over which they operate is one between a divine and a human interpretation, and between an interior and an exterior (or historical) interpretation. Let us look at the first axis of this model. For some, like Bultmann or Tillich,

redemption is an act of God from above, judging the entire finite world, and challenging us to transcend it. For others, like the liberation theologians (such as Gutierrez, Sobrino, or Boff), redemption is what the historical Jesus has really done, that is, fight for the marginalised, and his death on their behalf is meant to inspire us to do the same, and continue the process of their redemption. Let us look at the second axis. For some, initiated by Rahner, there is a mysterious and real self-communication of God to the human spirit, which is symbolised in a perfect way in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Going further along these lines, authors like Pieris and Knitter would stress this transcendental orientation to salvation in all humanity, and see it symbolised in different yet effective ways, not just by the death of Christ or christianity, but by all religions and their myths, which are meant to arouse awareness of the deeper mystery. New Age people, like Fox, would at times suggest that the mystery amounts to the fact that the divinity is an inherent constituent of (human) nature. Against the entirety of this kind of thinking, there are theologians (as in the ITC committee) who want more than a symbolic function for the work and death of Christ, and who would see in it - and in his resurrection - a real and effective (efficient) source of grace. One schema (which originates in von Balthasar) which appears to be popular in some circles (and in the ITC committee ?) is the idea that Jesus (on the cross and in the descent into hell) has entered into a supreme kenotic self-abnegation, one which presented to God a perfectly empty space in which God could, through his emptyness, fill the world with redeeming grace. The locus par excellence of this mystery is the church, which celebrates it in the community of its sacramental liturgy. There are some who see this as the divine fulfillment of what personhood means to humanity, and of what covenant means both to humans and to God. This schema (at times presented as Johannine in inspiration) is itself discussable.

In the light of this psychology it is good to rethink the experience of Jesus as he approached his passion and death. Let us look at the mystery of Gethsemane.

Biblical critics suggest that the Gethsemane story was originally an integral part of a pre-Markan passion narrative. In all probability, it may well have originally been its introduction, and thus insinuated the mood in which it was intended to be read. Mark has inherited it, and adapted it for his own overall purposes. It shows the signs, even prior to Mark's redaction, of being a literary construct, modelled perhaps on the rubrics set down for the Jewish high priest in the temple liturgy of Yom Kippur. Mark's interest in the scene focusses on three dimensions of the experience of Jesus : *the pain, the prayer, and the process of enlargement of his personality.* It is clear from Mark's text that no witnesses are present at the scene as described. It could be that 'Gethsemane type' experiences historically occurred in the adult life of Jesus, especially towards its end, on a number of occasions, on many of which witnesses were present and knew what was going on. The early christian community seems to have grasped how significant these experiences were for the formation of the full person of Jesus, and how they prepared him for the coming passion and death. While the scene as narrated by Mark, and in the other gospels, is a literary construct full of redactional inventiveness, it is true to the type of these experiences and affords a privileged and rare glimpse into the interiority of Jesus as he faced what was ahead of him.

The pain experienced in Gethsemane is described by Mark in terms of total shock, or a sense of the arrival of a negative eschaton. It was as if Jesus stood out of his very self, in a bad kind of ecstasy, and stood into nothing that was positive. Matthew uses the verb lypeisthai, meaning that there was no joy in him, as there was none in Adam and Eve after their first paradise had collapsed. Mark uses the verb ademonein, to indicate that there is something demonic about it. He also uses the verb ekthambeisthai. It suggests an astonishment, an amazement, an aghastness at

the brusk invasion of terror into his whole being. He has entered into fright itself. Luke calls it agonia : it is a dynamic and fruitless anxiety, where there is constant struggle, but no possible assurance of victory. It is a fighting anguish. John (in a parallel text, in chapter 12) says that he trembled in spirit (taraxomai). The epistle to the Hebrews, in another parallel text, in chapter 5, tells of loud cries and silent tears. There are other images : he is being sifted like wheat, being baptised, drinking the cup, entering the hour...

It is a sense of excessive Evil, that is annihilative and deconstructive of his very being. This Evil is much more than a privation of good. It is a vast, threatening, even 'positive' thing, that paradoxically is the arena for a positive transformation of the person who enters it. It takes him beyond all maps, beyond all reference points, and leaves him utterly alone. Here there is no such thing as thesis and antithesis, and there is no possibility of synthesis. Here we are beyond the sort of world where things correspond with each other and explain each other. Other gospels than Mark, and the letter to the Hebrews, develop this primordial experience in their own way, and amplify the sense of pain beyond all possible articulation and description. It is beyond all possible healing. It is beyond every project and every future. It is a silence beyond all systems and all proportions. The disproportion presses and constrains and urges anyone who enters it, and decentres them beyond the possibility of finding a new centre. It is more like a non-world than a world. Even 'non-world' is not adequate to express it. It is beyond even the possibility of comparison with 'world' of any kind.

It is wrong to see the experience of Gethsemane as a temptation. It is rather a trial. A temptation is a hesitation in the face of alternatives, one attractive, the other unattractive but obligatory in conscience. A trial is rather an ordeal, when one comes face to face with a crisis in which there are no alternatives whatever. It is a putting to the test of one's pure faith and trust, without options. Jesus is on trial in the Gethsemane experiences. His trial is that of a person who has gone beyond the possibility of being heroic, and the possibility of being helped by divine intervention. He cannot be heroic, because he cannot handle the situation, and yet he must remain in it. He cannot expect divine intervention and help, because any kind of God who might so help, has definitively and irrevocably deserted him. There can and will be no angel to comfort him (as Luke later inserts into the account), no Elijah, no apocalyptic intervention. There are no conscious disciples who can help. There is no succurrence, no help, and in effect, there is no 'God'. Even God disappears in this strange arena where images are impossible. You cannot live in this death, and you cannot die out of it. You cannot face it, because it has no face, and you lose your own face when you meet it.

It is at this point that Jesus prays. Mark has him begin his prayer with the word, 'Abba!'. It has been suggested, in the wake of Joachim Jeremias, that this is beautiful child-like spiritual language, and that it is unique to Jesus in his speech to God in prayer, and central to that prayer. These claims have rightly been questioned in recent years. In Mark's dramatisation of Gethsemane, the use of the word 'Abba!' is rather a regressive act, triggered by Jesus' profound resistance to the situation in which he finds himself. He makes a deep counter-wish to the reality before him. He then, regressively, has recourse to the language of infantile seduction of a loving parent, in a final attempt to change the mind of the 'God' who seems to have allowed and even created this negative situation. The attempt fails, and Jesus is left with just the undiluted reality. He is literally deserted by all gods of the kind whose function is to move in to help people out when they are in trouble. He is left totally alone, alone and impotent in the face of what is and cannot be removed. No one goes into a Gethsemane : rather, it comes to someone, exactly in the fading away of all that is known and familiar.

This is precisely where a process takes place, that is profoundly formative of his personality. He realises that he is being betrayed, not just by Judas, but by God. He is being betrayed into the unresolvableness of the crisis. There is recognition that the true reality-God, encountered here, has indeed mastered him, as the fantasy-God who might help him disappears entirely. The reality-God, and not the fantasy-God, is recognised as the true author, artisan, and indeed artist of the new situation. Jesus can cry, in the words of Hopkins (in The Wreck of the Deutschland), 'Thou mastering me !'. Jesus may indeed pray, and that more earnestly, as Luke puts it, but he is in reality the prey of the situation. He is neither priest nor victim here : all such categories are left well behind. That sort of temple has been destroyed.

There is recognition of the true character of the reality-God, now disclosed in the complete absence of the false one. At that point there is what has been called (by Antoine Vergote) a dialectical diagenesis of a new sense of God, and of a new sense of self, in a new kind of relationship that is not one of dependency. Jesus must never have felt less like a 'Son of God' (that is, like a protected-privileged child of the now recognised-as-unreal 'God'). Here he is free from all 'nice' gods, and in that freedom he is 'gifted' with a new kind of 'agnosticism' and even, in its own sense, 'atheism'. He is free from Delphic oracles, divine imperatives, and wills of that sort of God. His attitude, and the real

God's attitude, to the situation are now one, and are thoroughly and utterly real, without cover-ups. Jesus can then face all that is real for him : he can lay down his life of himself, knowing that no one, not even a 'god', can take it from him. He has the capacity to dispose of his own very being, his life itself, as his own. He has become his own person. At the moment when he can do nothing as a result, he has come to self-possession and self-mastery. He has an unbrokered immediacy with reality. His is now the powerlessness without which there is no grandeur. It is a relationship with the true God, in the difference of distance, in the communion of two persons who do not try to identify with each other, and who, together, do not try to change the nature of things. From now on, Jesus can look at death purely and simply as death. He can realise now that he would not be facing death had he not adopted certain positions of solidarity with the little people of Galilee, and challenged the temple practices that seemed to exclude them. He can stand tall, in his freedom, and the foundations of his own powerless courage.

This is clearly Mark's Jesus, and his Gethsemane scene is not accidental to the formation of Jesus' character. It is the real climax of its development. Jesus has been baptised, so to speak, from the Jordan encounter with John, into the Spirit of Gethsemane, and it has progressively made him this kind of emptied-out man.

The fundamental conflict which Jesus has negotiated here is not a political one between various human groups. Nor is it a psychological one, between himself and various forms of human megalomania. It is not even, directly, a historical one, for it is much more than a questioning of his life-commitment to the poor of Galilee. It is a profoundly spiritual, theological, even mystical one, between himself and every previous conception of God that he has formed. It is the failure of every possible 'fantasy' about God and about his own identity with God. It is only the full acceptance of that failure that makes him who he really is, a man ready for the passion and death that await him.

This failure of fantasy is in particular the failure of his imagination about the kind of God he had experienced in Galilee as adventing to the anawim through the healing miracles. That kind of God is now no more for Jesus, and there will be no more advents like that. At that time, in Galilee, Jesus could well have conceived his identity as the Son of that kind of God, indeed as his anointed one, or Messiah. Now, in the dark purification of Gethsemane, he has to relinquish all such images of his, and his God's identity and relationship. There is a double paradox here. He is truly human now, when at last he has lost all the 'advantages' of humanness. He is truly divine now, when at last he has lost all the 'advantages' of divinity. It is only at such a price that humanity and divinity, in their full and real sense, can belong to a single person, and it is only at that price that a human being can become, psychologically, that kind of incarnate person. The definition of Chalcedon should be read in the experience of Gethsemane.

At the Galileean 'moment' of his life, when the Kingdom broke into the human world, Jesus grasped his God as always active in the cause of those who were marginalised and discriminated against, and actively intervening in their favour. It was a 'romantic' vision, not without its permanent truth. At Gethsemane, he discovered what that truth really was. God did not have to intervene in favour of the poor, to be on their side. God could move against discrimination, but would not move against nature. When, in the normal course of events, in the nature of the case, and in the natural flow of their history, the poor got into trouble, God would be with them in the trouble, but would not intervene to get them out of the trouble. When death looked them in the face, God would let them meet that death, and be with them there, in it all, without intervening to make them immortal. God was indeed a God of the poor, but a God of the poor in the cosmos.

This insight has always been at the heart of the christian message, especially in the new testament writings. The challenge there presented, is that one cannot become graced with participation in the divine filiation of Jesus, without going through a similar Gethsemane experience of one's own, and losing what one thought was one's previous identity, and one's previous God. Paul grasped it. He spoke of the 'crucified' Christ : his word for 'crucified' is estauromenos, which means, opened out, into an unboundariedness, through the entire experience he abbreviates in the word, crucifixion. Mark grasped it. He spoke of the Christ who gave his life as redemption for many, that is, in his marvellous Greek here, gave his psyche as down-payment for the hoi polloi, the nameless multitude. Matthew grasped it. He spoke of the ultimate mystery of the child who alone enters the Kingdom of heaven. He did not mean 'child' in its 'nice' symbolism which we spontaneously imagine, but the child as symbol for the nobodies who have no rights and have no title to exist that they can erect from their own fantasies. John grasped it. He spoke of the Spirit flowing through the opened-up-ness of the crucified Christ, to and for others, and set up the eternal icon of the opened-up, stigmatic Jesus, and all of the little ones who are also opened-up as he was, as the source of authentic mystery and life for the world. Luke grasped it. He dared to have Jesus proclaim a never-ending Jubilee of Israel and the nations together, a cosmic process of transfiguration, that would come only from Jesus and those who were interiorly changed in the full experience of unjust condemnation and extinction of all the life they thought was in

substance to the phenomenology that has emerged from our renewed understanding of Hebrew culture and religion, in which revelation about redemption has come to us (an understanding not available in his time to Aquinas himself). I believe the heart of this theology of creation lies in understanding the intentionality of the divine Persons in the creative act itself. Perhaps it can also be heard by a people tired of the seeming negativity and ultimate despondency of the redemption approach. In such a proposal, we might be able to talk of a more positive God, of understanding, compassion, and creative love, a God who is with and within us in our fragility, to turn us into active co-creators of his and our cosmos.

8. THE DOWNGRADING OF SIN BY REDEMPTION

Teilhard de Chardin:

'We can no longer derive the whole of evil from the first hominian'.

'We are irresistibly drawn to find a new way of picturing to ourselves the events as a consequence of which evil invaded our world'.

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them. The church is intended to be a community gathered together, of those who have been participants in the mystery of Gethsemane. They are, as Thomas Merton once put it (and he, a monk of Gethsemane), 'the hollow men'.

But they are not just that. Jesus encountered the mystery of law in Gethsemane. There are three kinds of law. There is the law of the land (nomos), and when one breaks it, one is in a situation of lawlessness (anomia) and injures the common good. There is the law of the gods (dike), and when one breaks it, one is in a situation of iniquity (hamartia), and runs counter to the will of Zeus. But there is a further law yet, the law of another order beyond the order of the gods themselves, and one cannot break it. Rather, it demands that one who encounters it submit to its unyielding, and unbreaking, demand. That demand is one of darkness and strife (nux, scotos, eris). The pain is quite peculiar here. In part, it is the opening up of a gap (aporia) hitherto unknown, and in part it is a death deeper than any previous conception of death (thanatos). The pain is located in the midst of these two experiences. Between the perception of abandonedness and the consciousness of an ultimate death to consciousness. Between Eros and Thanatos. This is both the agony (where the protagonist cannot win), and the emptyness (where the nothingness pervades everything). It is at this point, and only at this point, that there is a release into the Real, that there is a meeting of reality in itself (Das Ding), where there is no seeking of a lost object but a finding of a Realness that can never be an object. In this extreme katharsis of one's subjectivity, there emerges a new and grand Desire. It does not attempt to possess anything, or to be what it is not. It allows itself to be drawn into, and immersed in the Beauty of a different Order, that now surrounds and penetrates it. And in that baptism, there is a shining, an eclat, of the identity that has been slowly forged in the entire process. Gethsemane has been a mystery of transfiguration. Not a transfiguration that happens on top of Mount Tabor, but one that is always there, if one goes to the bottom of the Mount of Olives and crosses the Kedron valley. After that, Calvary is not a further tragic moment, but a continuation of the real. Easter is not a compensation for the experience, but its eternalisation in and for the sake of the whole real cosmos.

It could be said that this Jesus has entered into conflict with, and emerged differently from, all known versions of the Hero Myth. It could also be said that his experience has transformed the meaning of the Tragic. It is not easy to grasp his identity without turning him into some kind of tragic hero : Gethsemane demands that we do so, and that we do better than that. In comparison with these values, the actual circumstances that led to Gethsemane, and followed it, matter relatively little. None the less, it is in their banality that Jesus' real Gethsemane began. Such is the strange demand of Incarnation. Perhaps it is even appropriate that we know so little, rather than much, of the external details : the centre could easily be obscured by the periphery.

Once Gethsemane has done its work in the formation of Jesus' personhood, he remains, as person, in the reality of the real. So does his God.

To understand redemption, we need to free the idea from a long-received pattern of human history, that was falsely seen in the bible (especially in Genesis) and that was actually the creation of St.Augustine. We are trying to get out from under it now, and to appreciate that redemption is much more than a remedy for that kind of human problem.

Often religious people in a Jewish-Christian tradition (in the past, anyway) have appealed to the Bible for their understanding of what it means to be human. They have appealed mostly to Genesis (chapters 1-3). This is a valid appeal.

Some have thought that the Bible implied a very short time span for the universe. They have thought that humans began from two historical individuals (Adam and Eve), not so long ago, indeed around 4,000 or 6,000 years ago, in an original paradise, without death or disease, and with privileges. They have thought that due to their actual sin, there was a historical 'fall', with consequences. The privileges were lost. Death and disease entered human history. Human appetites became disordered. Our (first and other) parents handed on to us, sexually, a human nature that was wounded, and mortal, and disordered, and so in need of rituals of purification and redemption. (In a Christian tradition, this means baptism....and 'religious education'.)

Science today would have great difficulty with this interpretation. It would not see it as historical.

Historical and literary criticism of the bible would also have great difficulty in reading these texts in this way.

These chapters are not historical, were never written as a historical record, and ought not be read literally. Primordial human history was never handed down in oral memory or stories. 4,000 (or 6,000) years ago two primitive hominids did not historically sin, and thereby leave paradise, fall, and become wounded, and hand on from that time a mortal[36] and disturbed human nature to their progeny. There was never a historically privileged original time, and there was never a single original fall from it. Homo primitivus (of whatever kind) did not have a spiritual life like that. The Bible did not mean to say that.

Rather, we know today, that Genesis is a piece of literature. To understand it, we need to do a kind of literary criticism. It is a composite *poem, meant to tell us about ourselves now,* not about imaginary (allegedly historical) people then. It is about the existential origin of (moral and religious) failure in all humans at all times (especially Jews). The author(s) of Genesis made up the 'poem' to bring home their (ethical) point to their readers.

Sometimes people ask: were Adam and Eve real? I like to say, yes, as real as you and me. For you and I – every one of us at all times – 'are' really Adam and Eve. The principal character of the poem, Adam, is a fiction that stands for each and all of us. He is a cartoon character standing for all of us. The word Adam is a make-up from the Hebrew word for red dirt, Adamah. You could 'translate' Adam today, as "Charlie 'Brown'": every 'Charlie' that ever walked on brown dirt. Or in good Australian, you might call him Ocker, from the word ochre, for red dirt: every Ocker, or the Ocker in all of us. Genesis tells us – symbolically and poetically - how all Ockers historically have always mucked up the business of living!

For example, in all human history, (especially at and since the stone age), humans have found change hard to handle. In enthusiasm for or rejection of what is new, they react violently. The violence destroys who they are, and are meant to be. Genesis is a revelation to all of us, that when we are like that, and do that kind of thing, we are behaving as humans, Adams, Eves, Charlies, Ockers, - and Jews - always did.

It also reveals to us the great mystery that the God of Gentleness will understand, and forgive us, and lead us through a new history to the true living of our own gentleness with God and one another. In a cultural world of so many negative historical and social influences today, we can still hear that call to be human, that is, to live truly God-given values. The message is not about excessive guilt or distortion of our make-up, it is about God-given possibilities of being who we truly are, despite the very real limitations we have from our background and environment and collective human history.

[36] All you need to explain the presence of death, is the second law of thermodynamics, the law of natural selection, and the presence of bacteria.

Science is able to live with such a vision, from a more authentic reading of Genesis. Many thinkers in the Christian community also find this vision a good way of continuing the tradition of the Church about the origin and history of human beings.

In this light, the doctrine of Original Sin needs to be translated into a contemporary horizon, with an alertness to science, and literary criticism. There is undoubted value in the doctrine, but it needs articulation within a new set of assumptions about the world, and history, and humanity. The core of the doctrine must be retained, but it must be re-packaged today. This re-packaging has not been (fully) achieved as yet.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is ambivalent about Genesis and Original Sin. On the one hand, it states that the account of the fall in Genesis is a figurative one. On the other hand, it affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of humans, a deed that dominates that history. It speaks of an actual first couple, present in a paradise world without ignorance, pain, disease or death.

This Catechism is issued as a guide for the preparation of national catechisms. Those formed in science today (and in literary criticism too) would hope that the bishops who publish them will do so in awareness of scientific data at present, and in awareness of the common approach of biblical interpreters today. [37]

The notion of original sin, as we have articulated it, is not in Scripture. It was created by St.Augustine, a passionate over-sexed North African.[38] He did not get the idea from the bible. He made a number of steps before he got to the core of it. Most of them are powered by his own experiences.

First of all, he had a conversion from Manicheeism. Manicheeism blamed God for the presence of evil in the world. Under the influence of Platonism, and general allegorical interpretation, and especially Ambrose, Augustine realised that God could not be the source of evil. He then jumped to the conclusion that it was *our responsibility, our fault.* He distinguished the evil I do from the evil I undergo, and put the emphasis on the former, making it the reason for the latter. He felt guilty.

Secondly, he wrote a letter to St.Jerome, in which most commentators see the *birth of original sin.* The letter is written in response to objections to his position above about human responsibility for evil. The objections are about *children*. How can they be responsible for the evil of fault? If they are not so responsible, why do they die? He said that they are heirs of sin and marked by it and so not innocent: they belong to the whole human guilty family, from Adam onwards. [He said here that children would finally in the afterlife have no suffering, though he changed his mind on this later.]

Thirdly, he read Genesis in the light of a small text of Romans, 5,12: 'in whom all have sinned'. Some say he read this in Latin translation, and would not have been impacted by it had he known it in the original Greek: I am not so sure this would have made much difference. I think the real influence on him here is reflection on his own life-experience: he spells it out in his *confessions*. He saw himself as a *prisoner of the enticements of sex.* He felt a power of sin in himself, which he personified with a capital S. He felt that only grace could save him. This is already a position on salvation.

Fourthly, he looked at Genesis on this basis, and *assumed a historical interpretation of the texts.* Real people (Adam and Eve) were historically in a truly human paradise (free from the above problems) and lost it by disobeying an actual divine precept. That first sin originated a whole history of sin in all the descendents of Adam. Only through Christ could they regain the original paradise. And some will, one day.

Fifthly, Augustine picked up an idea that had been around in the inter-testamental literature and some of the fathers earlier than Augustine. It was the idea of the *'two penchants'* within us. A good desire, and an evil inclination. You could call the latter a 'bad heart syndrome'. He moved away from any diabolic explanation of how sin happens (for example, through the action of bad angels), towards an anthropological or very human one.

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[37] See Joan Acker, Creationism and the Catechism, America, December 16, 2000.

[38] Cf. Jean-Michel Maldame, OP, Domuni, initheo, Le Peche originel, 2004.

He thought this *evil inclination* (the yetzer hara of the Hebrews) was in humans from their creation. As a result of Adam giving in to it, it and not just death was passed on from generation to generation. We were all born with the evil inclination. Sexually.

Sixthly, Augustine, as time went on, entered into a number of controversies with others about these things, and hardened many of his views.

Pelagius was from Great Britain, from a catholic family, and become a monk in Rome and then in Israel (after Alaric sacked Rome in 410). Augustine had a monk's quarrel with him. Augustine after his conversion had renounced all sexual relations, and lived celibacy in a monastic-type community. When he was made a bishop, he organised his (celibate) clergy into a monastic community. One of Pelagius' monastic group (Celestius) said baptism was not needed for salvation, because we were able to do (some) good without grace. Augustine said no: *without baptism children cannot be saved, and if they die like that they go to hell. Grace was absolutely needed to do any good.* The heart of the debate is really about the *feasibility of monastic life in a secular situation.* Augustine says it is impossible without grace, because we are so conditioned by the evil inclination. The Pelagians said some kind of accommodation of it was possible and genuine.

Seventhly, Augustine had an argument with Julian about *concupiscence* (or the activity of the evil inclination in us). Julian said concupiscence was not bad in itself. You could use libido badly or well. Augustine said it was an evil in itself, and a perversion of human nature. He conceded that marriage was in fact needed for the future of the human race, and so 'allowed' (without 'approval') the use of sex in marriage, but for noble purposes only (fides, proles, sacramentum).
Sexual pleasure was not one of these noble purposes.

Eighthly, Augustine allowed his own experience (at conversion) to dictate his theology. He had been in *despair*. As he thought Paul had been. He *thought concupiscence was so radical in him that he could not do any good by himself.* His every desire was marked by sin. He came to define in practice original sin as a <u>state marked by this concupiscence</u>.

Ninthly, he moved into real *pessimism*. He saw Adam as the patriarch of all humanity, and he saw the fault of Adam as transmitting 'original sin in the strict sense' to all his descendants. For him, a newborn baby is not innocent as the original Adam was. He is a sinner from and by (as a result of) birth. He thought that unbaptised babies would go to hell. He thought most of the human race would go there. He spoke of a 'mass perditionis', a 'massa damnata'.

Tenthly, he came up with a paradigm of *human history*: Adam received a special state, by supernatural gift, beyond what human nature was able to do, - this was called original justice. This aggravated his fault. He thus passed on to his progeny a human nature in a state of privation of what God had freely intended for all of them in the original Adam. Because children are conceived sexually in sin, they inherit a nature marked by this lack, this sin.

Eventually (in the Council of Orange, 529) through the influence of Prosper of Aquitaine, the church came up with a <u>dogmatic definition of original sin on these lines.</u> Gregory the Great took it up and spread it through the Latin church. So did Isidore in Seville and Bede in northern England. There was a Neo-Platonic idea that all humanity formed a whole in the first patriarch.

Increasingly, the focus of it was concupiscence, the evil inclination. It is the power of attraction to what is wrong. Flesh revolts against spirit. Affective inclinations (love) are corrupted by sin. Sense attraction is sullied. Sexuality is vitiated. All sex relations are marked by disorder and so by culpable concupiscence. [Incidentally, this is why St.Bernard refused to accept the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, which was not defined in his day: Mary was conceived sexually, so she could not escape the consequences!]

Augustine's idea of a human being now (himself?) is almost unbelievable in terms of how real people really look:

1) Dominated by 'evil desire', yetzer hara, bad heart syndrome, 'flesh', complicity with evil, concupiscence
2) This is the make-up of humans from their creation, and not due to the accidents of particular histories;
3) It means there is:

a) no full submission of higher faculties to God;
b) no full submission of sense faculties to reason and will –
   - affective inclinations are corrupted;
   - sense attraction is sullied (especially re sex);
   - sexual relations are disordered (all of them);
   - loss of sense of personal dignity (odious to self);
c) no full submission of matter to soul/spirit – the person is weakened and deprived of natural energy;
d) no full submission of lower creatures (animals) to humans.
e) Special difficulties re
   - work;
   - sex;
   - death.

Of course, the key word is 'full' (submission). There is a given impression that there is not much submission, and certainly not nearly as much as there ought to be.

Augustine's idea of a human world now (sin of the world) in which this sort of human lives:

1) 'this' present age (vis a vis the age to come);
2) violent, seductive;
3) we are all victims, and colluding agents in it;
4) each neonate is born into it as victim-potential colluder;
5) there is a logic of evil that makes us all do more and more evil to cover up what we and others before us have already done

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All this is the result and consequence of 'sin'.

[One difficulty here, is that we live in 'many worlds' (social, human ones) and some of them are a lot more innocent than this description. In fact, the family-world into which a new-born comes is a huge contrast to this description of 'the world' – there might be more of that kind of 'this world' in the church the parents take the baby to for baptism!]

Down the track of history, some theologians tried to get out from under the heaviness of all this. Anselm said sin came from the *will of each person*: the weakness of the flesh was not sin in a true sense. Aquinas did not question the going view of history: original justice, fall, original sin, redemption. He worked out the aspects of original justice: *perfect submission of the higher faculties (will and intellect) to God; submission of the sense powers to will and intellect; submission of matter to soul (hence impassibility, or the impossibility of suffering, and immortality); and submission of all lower creatures to humans: the human is lord of all creation.*

This is why, I think, even Aquinas, through his loyalty to the church teaching and to tradition, had a view of the humanity of Jesus that would be hard for many to understand today. He knew Jesus was different from us! He did not have available to him the kind of historical Jesus studies we now have. He found it hard to say what the human functioning of Jesus was actually like, in positive terms. He was convinced it was not like the way we function! There were no human analogies for it.

This approach actually brings in considerations that are other than those that worried Augustine and that are earlier than he. They come from a *strong emphasis on Jesus as God*.

There had been in the early centuries in the west, a strong influence of Alexandria (and St.Cyril). Looking back now, we might wonder if it was a little too 'monophysite', and perhaps a little too 'docetic'. This was spread in the Latin Church largely through St.Hilary (c.315-367/8). He is a bit like an Athanasius of the west. He had almost the authority of Augustine for Aquinas and the medieval doctors.

He did not think that Jesus *suffered in his psyche* or soul, but that he suffered only the force of action against his body.[39] [It is hard to imagine that now: but the divine side of Jesus was very strongly maintained.] This would have appealed to the strong stoicism around at the time. There was an impression among the medievals that any psychic suffering or disorder was in itself sinful. That is why they refused it for Jesus.

In the fairly common position in the west, it was also believed that Jesus had the *beatific vision from conception,* and was filled with a *quasi-angelic infused knowledge,* and *did not really learn from increasing acquired knowledge* originating through the senses. All this came to Aquinas as received doctrine. Albert and Bonaventure adhered to it.

I think it is pretty clear that someone endowed like that has no 'evil inclinations'! or original sin!
Or actual sin!

In his early writings, Aquinas agreed with Hilary – no pain in the psyche for Jesus, and he agreed with the common teaching – no acquired knowledge in Jesus.

He changed his mind as he grew older, and *insisted on pain in the psyche (passiones animae), and acquired (experimental) knowledge.* My own view is that he might have changed even more had he lived longer…. He still upheld the beatific vision from the origin of Jesus' life: recently, most theologians are saying no to that. [Aquinas, and the theological tradition since, held that the natural derivation of joy from the beatific vision was thwarted by a particular divine decree….theologians don't like having to invoke such a deus ex machina unless they have to.] I have been working myself on an experiential account of beatific vision for someone who might have it in this life, and been trying to make it compatible with the limits of real life. I am still inclined now to think this is a possible way to go, but I wonder perhaps if it is the best way to go. It is more real to think that the question should never have been asked. I think it is more of a defence of tradition than an insight into Jesus. I would rather at present say, with Torrell, that *Jesus did not have the beatific vision until after the resurrection* – it is more real. Also, again with Torrell, I would re-interpret the quasi-angelic infused knowledge that the tradition has claimed for Jesus, and make it the *kind of infused knowledge God gave the prophets of old.* Aquinas was never seemingly fully comfortable with having positive 'passiones animae' in Jesus, like experiences of joy, wonder, delight…. Surely Jesus had them..

Even with this, theology has not really worked on the way Jesus' humanness functioned without 'original sin', as a Jewish prophet who had to learn by the road of experience, and who felt things deeply in his sensitivity. There is surely a greater humanness in him than the subordinated and diluted humanness that the ancient tradition thought it had to maintain.

Jesus according to the doctrinal tradition was conceived virginally and so did not appear as a potential subject of original sin. As far as Mary goes, it is obvious that she was conceived sexually by her parents. For a long time, including the time of Aquinas, this meant that she incurred the debt of original sin. It was only *Duns Scotus* in the 14th century who *distinguished between the debt, and the actual incurring of original sin, and so opened the door to a 'previous redemption' of Mary, preserved free from incurring original sin, through the foreseen merits of the one Saviour Jesus.* But what that actually means in the lived humanity of Mary, does not seem to have been worked out….

The dogma of the immaculate conception was not defined until 1854.

This is a reflection on the Mediterranean world, Italy and Spain, but principally on *southern Italy in the 17th and 18th and 19th century.* Southern Italy is made up of mountains and peninsulas. There were in those times some 3000 inhabited locations for a population of about two and a half million. There were 3,700 small parishes. The village is everything, and the parish church is at its centre. The people are peasants (in southern Italy, in places like Calabria and Lucania). They speak dialect – not 'la lingua toscana nella bocca romana'. They are largely

[39] Cf. Paul Gondreau, The Passions of Christ's soul in the theology of St.Thomas Aquinas, Munster, Aschendorf, 2002.

illiterate (in all the Kingdom of Naples, only 5 to 10 % could read and write, and most were in the city of Naples itself). They are poorly fed. They hardly ever leave the area they were born in. There is not much good roadwork. Hygiene is bad. Many suffer from epilepsy. Robbers live on the highways - with drifters, crazies, troublemakers, beggars, gypsies. Mortality rates are high. They work the earth. The Italian peasant (especially in the south) has been called a mule of the human race, a beast of burden.

The people are almost 100% catholic. They are never aware of anything else but their inherited form of catholic life. Their faith is expressed in practices, in the home, in the street, in wayside chapels, in churches, in gatherings (like pilgrimages, processions, missions) and in associations (like confraternities). Preachers and 'spiritual directors' (in practice, priests who hear their confessions and demand penance) encourage them. They have almost no secular life. Many of their practices come from superstition and magic. It is the piety of the poor. They live with a combination of devotional practices (that are very sentimental) and penances and mortifications (that are very cruel – collective flagellations, for example). They have a sense of the dead (devotion to skeletons, relics, indulgences, Gregorian masses, if possible the body of a saint exposed in the church, etc.) They do not think about what they do: they do it in imitation of one another. We need to realise that they habitually go to church before dawn (with the women on one side of the church and the men on the other), and that they have only candlelight. They do not read much, if at all. They live what they call the 'vita divota'. It is the liturgy of the poor. Devotional practice is usually in inverse proportion to religious education. What religious education there was, came from the (Bellarmine) Catechism of the Council of Trent and Lenten missions. Christ did stop at Eboli.

There were in the area many priests, but of poor quality. There were dynasties of bishops from noble families. In religious houses, there was organised prayer (meditation) for the community and the parish faithful for up to five hours a day. Marian devotion was everywhere. There were 'santini' everywhere (small holy cards of saints). And statues. Bread was distributed at the doors of the house each day (each morning) for the 'street people'. Many lived by going begging from one religious house to another….

The historical influences that have created these practices are many, and are hidden in what these people actually do. Some of the influences are from the desert fathers (their books have been found in religious houses of Calabria and Lucania at these times) and many (middle) eastern traditions. Greek, Byzantine, and Islamic influences are vaguely present. *The general result is a 'people's practice' that has materialised the faith in its own way*. It has made them feel small and imperfect and bad and sinful in the presence of an Infinite God who cannot be escaped. There is actually a strong sense of the presence of God, but it is that of an overpowering Infinity to which excessive obedience is due. To become a saint would be to live these (local and cultural) practices fully – something that is almost impossible to do, especially for peasants. They did not think laity could be saints! [The ideal is the 'wounded saint' – looking like a ragged hermit.] Sin was regarded as virtually inevitable, and there was a general pessimism about human nature.

This background has been present for centuries before the period of our interest. Ideas do not change it much. They never do. But we need to see what Luther and the Reformation, and the Council of Trent and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, did to it, and how it remained, even stronger, after both these movements in the larger world.

At the core of Luther's insight was a sense of the absoluteness of the Cross of Jesus. In a way, he picked up on the inevitability of sin, and the general pessimism of many people at the time. He gave both much more emphasis than they had in the 'people's piety'. The cross, for Luther, was so total that all 'works' were irrelevant to a real Christian life, and damaging to it. He admitted practices of 'virtue' to meet the needs of public and civic life, but he did not see any spiritual or salvific value in them. In their place, he demanded unqualified faith and trust in Jesus crucified: sola fides. This almost mystical devotion to the cross highlighted its expiatory or atonement value for the sins of humankind: it did not focus on the transforming value of the crucified and risen one. Luther wanted this 'verbum crucis' proclaimed in preaching. The 'sense of sin' came from two directions. It came first from meditation on the cross (sin must be bad because the crucifixion was so bad). It came then from reflection on human 'works' (they inevitably led to sin, and we are all condemned to crucifixion and responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus in our place). Luther thought that an excessive value put on works would devalue the passion of Christ: our merits would take away from his. This negative mysticism had to lead to a stunned acceptance that Jesus did it all for us.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation (and the Council of Trent) responded with a need for a mystical devotion to Jesus Crucified. To that extent, it gave something of a consent to Luther. But it went on to respond with two

other things. First of all, it highlighted a need to preach the transformative value of the Crucified in our lives. Then it emphasised a need to tell the people that faith in such a saviour must lead to ascetical practices ('good works'), not just to stunned amazement.

It was very suspicious of a mystical way without consequent ascetical expression. It was mostly (but not exclusively) in Spain that the catholic mystical side of this flourished (for example, in the Carmelite tradition). It was mostly (but again not exclusively) in Italy that the derivative catholic ascetical side flourished. There was no other ascetical tradition immediately available than that of the people's piety. In effect *the new Christ-mysticism became a new motivation for reinforcing the materialisation of the faith already achieved in the practices of the people.*

This emphasis on the demand for asceticism as a result of mystical insight meant a message, that true recollection must flow into mortification. There was significant acting out of crucifixion fantasies.[40] It also placed a strong accent on the role of ascetical guidance in the carrying out of that message. 'Spiritual directors' presented the mystical values, and demanded the ascetical follow-through. It is at this time that meditation (examen) on one's motives is highlighted.

The real need was to take this to the ordinary people. This happened mostly through newly reformed, or newly instituted religious communities. It came from them to the people at large through *parish missions,* which members of these institutes gave.

In France, a popular mission tradition began (to implement Trent's call for preaching). It can be seen for example in St.Vincent de Paul ('catechetical' missions). A similar mission tradition emerged in Spain ('penitential' missions). In northern Italy, it came through St.Leonard of Port Maurice ('eclectic' missions, i.e. both catechetical and penitential); in central Italy, through St.Paul of the Cross (missions focussed on the mysticism of the cross); and in southern Italy, through the fraternity known as the 'Apostolic Missions'(the Pii Operarii). Alfonso de Liguori belonged to the latter in his early priestly life.

But there was something different about parts of southern Italy. The work of these missions did not reach to the poorest of the peasants, in the villages, and especially the goatherds. In summer they had their flocks on the mountains, and moved them in October to winter in Puglia, bringing them back to the mountains in May. They lived with their flocks. They were allowed to go home to their people for three days every two weeks. They were not affected even by changes in village life. They were still living the practices of the people that had been with their ancestors for centuries. Further, there had been a papal suppression of 'conventini' (small religious communities), especially of the mendicants and above all of the Capuchins, in the remote places of southern Italy, especially close to where the goatherds were: there were no resident religious resources to renew the people. New parishes were not generally set up to replace the suppressed conventini.

It was the discovery of this situation that led Alfonso de Liguori to establish the Redemptorists, in order to preach to these people. But he did so with qualifications, due to the spiritual mentality of this culture.

In fact, any renewed spiritual approach to life for the people in southern Italy came from attitudes seen explicitly in two authors. One was Alfonso Rodriguez (a 17th century Jesuit, who wrote meditations on the passion, on the fruits of the eucharist, on consecration to Christ). The other was Bonaventura de Muro (a Capuchin, who wrote 'The Painful Year' – of the sorrows of the Saviour - published first in 1693 and then in 1709). It was a harsh, ascetical imitation of the sufferings of Jesus in the passion. It influenced early Redemptorists like the student Domenico Blasucci, the spiritual director Paolo Cafaro and the brother saint Gerard Majella.[41] It was not the kind

[40] Some theologies of the eucharist at this time accentuated the immolation of Christ. Sacraments were there to help us be more like the crucified Christ through our mortification.

[41] It is true that people like Gerard Majella were quickly taken over by people's imagination, so that their own personality is hidden beneath cultural expectation. It is also true that it took nearly 150 years for Gerard to be canonised, because the Vatican did not want to seem to canonise the people's piety of Southern Italy and have it imitated! Gerard was 23 when he joined the Redemptorists (his mother had died the same year) and died six years later.

of holiness that the official church (Rome) promoted, and it was not one that appealed congruently to educated and elite people. It had not been influenced by the culture of western Europe. There was a holy madness in it. It belonged to, and came from, the people's piety.

Alfonso did not come from this background. He was a cultured, educated, upper class person from the city of Naples. He had received a lot of influence from Renaissance humanism, through Muratori and Benedict XIV. This was not negative to the body, and did include an optimistic approach to human nature. Alfonso toned down the ascetical demand of the going people's spirituality, while maintaining it – he felt he had no option about that, if he wanted to communicate credibly with the people. He was a man of the heart, patient, human, optimistic. He wanted to protect the body, not abuse it. But he was also a man of the people, and the people were not as humane as Alfonso.

He modified the going spirituality through several concepts. First of all, he interpreted the mystical approach to the passion, in a transformative vein, as living a '*viva memoria'* of the person of the crucified. [This, I think, was not original to him: it was already in certain spiritual trends of the time, and was present in Crostarosa and Falcoia.] On that basis, and with his own originality, *he interpreted the follow-through of this mysticism, not as the harsh asceticism of the peasant people, nor even as a humanised modification of it, but as a commitment to the 'apostolic life'*.[42] This has been called the charism of the Redemptorists, but it is also their inherent ambiguity. (Perhaps it is their fatal flaw?).

The vita apostolica meant a life modelled on what was understood to be the life of Jesus and the early apostles, on mission. [The actual information available then about how they lived, historically, was quite meagre by present standards, but that was irrelevant to their purposes.] Their vision was a romantic one. It included a 'spirituality' that was truly human, because Jesus was truly human. They projected on to Jesus and the apostles the kind of humanism they believed in. But they followed through with their original intuition. They saw the apostolic life as basically including a commitment to itinerant preaching (missions) and to a pastoral presence among the poorest of the people on these people's own terms. To that extent it was a continuation of the incarnation.

It is because of the last point that the 'vita apostolica' is not a completely clear concept. The vita apostolica included some kind of solidarity or identification with 'the people', and with the people's practice of their faith and devotion. This did not cohere perfectly, to say the least, with the 'truly human' dimension of devotion that flowed for Alfonso from the (Renaissance and Counter Reformation) ideal of being a viva memoria of Jesus and the apostles, and, of course, from his own upbringing.

In general, the practical side of their life works out well, while the spiritual theory is ambivalent.

In practice, the early Redemptorist mission did not focus on the central churches of a town. It supplied as many confessors as the people needed. It was of no fixed length. And – and here is the nub – it included a promotion of the 'vita divota'! [In fact, it was because it did this last thing that it received Roman approval.] It was in this way that the early Redemptorists lived the 'vita apostolica' as they thought Jesus and the apostles had done. [The missions were also free of charge, included independent lodging for the missionaries, who lived their own community prayer life on the mission, and were committed to penitential austerity re food, etc; but these aspects come from the practice of the Pii Operarii.]

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[42] Alfonso wanted 12 priests and 7 brothers (= deacons of the early church) in his communities. It is interesting to look at the attitude to the brothers. They could be admitted even if illiterate. It was an option to teach them to read. For them, the imitation of Christ meant 'do your tasks'. They were there to serve (at table) and work (wash dishes, etc.) They were taught the Bellarmine catechism, the rules and constitutions, how to serve mass, how to make a good confession. They did a three day retreat each quarter, during which their manual work was reduced to 3 hours a day! They were told to be like the suffering Christ.

The vita apostolica, in its spiritual vision, was really a compromise between an ideal of renewal through inculturation of the life of Jesus into the missionaries, and the people's piety.

How far the 'Redemptorist' approach goes towards 'people piety' and how far it goes towards 'inculturated Jesus life' is a perduring question and an unsolved one. Later, Hofbauer will lean to the inculturation of the original concept in the world of Warsaw and Vienna. So will Neumann in the world of the eastern American states and their parishes. North American Redemptorist tradition comes from this background. Passerat will go the other way, into a 'French' asceticism, as will, in a more academic way, Desurmont. The Anglo-Irish-Australian Redemptorist tradition is the heir of Passerat and Desurmont, and the Belgians, more than of Hofbauer and Neumann, at least in theory. In practice, modern cultural trends have largely taken over.

The Redemptorists were given state tolerance in Naples largely because they were thought to keep the mountain people quiet!

At present (early third millenium) Redemptorists have done numerically best in places where modernity and secularisation have not reached yet. These are places where the people's piety of old is still holding strong, and many of these places are hispanic or eastern European. The influence of these groups on the articulation of Redemptorist spirituality is strong, and it has moved in the direction of a restoration of older practices (under the rubrics of 'spirituality' and 'community' vis a vis 'mission' or 'apostolate').

There are lessons to be learnt from this reading of history.

Pastoral renewal is never a direct shift from one mentality to another. It consists in an ongoing set of dynamics between people's piety and approaches that are more conformed to the cultural persuasions of a more human, and a more 'Jesus' attitude to life.

There is an inherent difficulty in Redemptorist understandings of redemption itself. It is not free of the difficulties of atonement theology that are enshrined in southern Italian culture. It is rooted in people's piety, which has never grasped or integrated a more genuine theology of redemption.

People's piety and more humane and biblically based understandings of redemption do not sit well together. This is the root of resistance to a renewal of the spirituality of redemption.

The present 'Italo-Hispanic' restorationism is one more phase in this dialectic. Opus Dei, the Neo-Catechumenate, Communione e Liberazione, etc are politically invested in keeping up the people's piety against any rapprochement with contemporary humanism or with critical biblical understandings of Jesus. They are trying effectively to canonise the people's piety from which they come.

We need to study again the real dimensions of the historical Jesus, and channel them into an influence on Soteriology and Christology itself.

9. THE STORY OF REDEMPTION

Introduction

Christian tradition has given us many images of Jesus. In the catacombs in Rome, he is seen as a shepherd. In the 4th c., after Constantine, he is seen as a Greek philosopher. From the 5th c., he is portrayed as Lord of the cosmos. After the 12th c., he is shown as vulnerable on the cross. From the time of the Reformation, much pathos, and indeed sentiment, enters into the kind of picture of Jesus we have been given.

But: beneath all these images, what was Jesus really like?

I want to look at three sources of information about him. First, archeology – the digs in Galilee, that give us the scene in Jesus' day; secondly, textual work – the traditions earlier than the gospels themselves, that show us the first impressions his disciples had of him; and thirdly, a study of the economic, social and political realities of the first century in Palestine, that show us the real context in which Jesus lived.

Archeology.

Galilee of old was 45 miles from north to south, and 25 miles from west to east, surrounded by other states and provinces. It lay between the Mediterranean, and the lake of Galilee. It was basically a province of two cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias. Around them was countryside and lakeside, farming and fishing. The population in the area was ethnically Jewish. But Sepphoris was a Roman-style oriental city, built by Herod Antipas during the youth of Jesus. It had a population of about 4 or 5 thousand. It had palaces like those in upper class Jerusalem. It had a theatre, a villa, mosaics, streets like Pompeii. A mosaic has been discovered that is called the Mona Lisa of Galilee. Tiberias was built slightly later, but in the time of Jesus, and again by Herod Antipas, and was on the lakeside.

Near these cities, were small villages, that were largely dormitory communities for those put to work in building the cities. Nazareth, about an hour's good walk from Sepphoris, was one of them. It was 1300 feet above sea level. It was 15 miles from the sea of Galilee, and 20 miles from the Mediterranean. Its population was about 500. Jesus was one of them.

Capernaum was another of these cities, quite close to Tiberias. It had a population of about 1000. Jesus lived there as an adult, longer than in any other place. A fishing boat has been uncovered near Capernaum, that dates to the first part of the first century: it is affectionally known as the 'Jesus boat'. It was a professional-style boat, built to carry nets loaded with fish. But it was made of flotsam and jetsam, bits of unwanted wood found along the shore – clearly the product of skilled men too poor to get regular timber. A 'house of Peter' has been uncovered in Capernaum, with stone vessels and pottery dating to the time of Jesus.

[Color prints of Nazareth and Capernaum, Sepphoris and Tiberias]

No synagogue-buildings from the time of Jesus have been found in either place. Synagogues dating to the 1st c have been found in only a few places, one of which is Capernaum – but it is later in the 1st c.

We need to realise that our image of Jesus in what we call his 'hidden life' in Nazareth might need revision. A life of prayerful retreat in the enclosed circumstances of a family does not really sit well with Nazareth as we now know it. It is *more likely that Jesus was part of a work-group that walked the hour or so journey each early morning to Sepphoris, did his job as a builder's laborer all day there, and walked home with the workers at night.* Was this where he learnt his lessons about life?

We need to realise that if there was no synagogue-building there, there was no school-building either. A life of peaceful, religious education in the schools does not sit well with Nazareth as we now know it. We have to think it *more likely that Jesus was unlettered in the skills of the schools, and learnt what he came to know in the university of real life.*

Textual work.

Courses on the gospels often begin with a chart of the first c.:

0----------30----------70----------100

We are told that Jesus lived in the first third of the century, that traditions, mostly oral, grew up about him in the second third, and that the gospels were written in the final third. It is correctly said that the gospels are not a factual record of what he did, but a literary composition, distilling the various traditions about him.

A lot of work has been done on this in the past couple of decades. Scholars will always argue about details, but the general impression is clear. A number of sources about Jesus from the second third of the first century have been isolated – some say there are at least 13 of them. A number of traditions about him that began before or around the year 30 can also be discerned – some say there are three main ones. Their picture of Jesus is different from that of the later gospel writings. This means that there is quite *a large development between the reality of Jesus and the first impressions taken by those who believed in him, and the pictures of Jesus we find in the gospels.* The gospels are a polished, theological meditation on the mystery of the man, done by a community that is now many decades away from Jesus, and done by writers who actually never saw Jesus. They have, for the purposes of faith in their communities, used quite a lot of creativity. They did it well, and that is why the church honors their work and believes in the gospels. But they have not shown us how Jesus really was in his own time.

The result is that we are now trying to spell out a *pen picture of Jesus drawn from the earliest or at least very early evidence,* rather than from the gospel writing at face value. What is it like? Here are some statements of outstanding scholars.

Meier :

> A Jewish layman from Nazareth in Galilee, a woodworker with no professional education as a scribe or student of the law, Jesus spent two years and some months (or perhaps only one year or a dry season – or two) travelling around Palestine, mostly in Galilee (and perhaps on some pilgrimages to the Jerusalem temple). In his itinerant ministry, he harked back to the ancient tradition of the oral prophets of Israel rather than to the more recent tradition of learned scribes composing apocalypses and other esoteric literature.
> Oral prophet he was, but he never actually 'said' a lot.

Borg :

> *" Jesus was a Spirit-person. Jesus was a healer. Jesus was a wisdom teacher. Jesus was a social prophet like the great prophets of the Hebrew bible. Jesus was a movement initiator, with an alternative social vision, one that was inclusive and egalitarian."*
>
> *"Jesus was a peasant, which tells us about his social class. Clearly, he was brilliant. His use of language was remarkable and poetic, filled with images and stories. He had a metaphoric mind. He was not an ascetic : he was world-affirming, with a zest for life. There was a socio-political passion to him - like a Ghandi or a Martin Luther King, he challenged the domination system of his*

> *day. He was a religious ecstatic, a Jewish mystic if you will, for whom God was an experiential reality. As such, Jesus as also a healer. And there seems to have been a spiritual presence around him, like that reported of St.Francis or the present Dalai Lama. And I suggest that as a figure of history, Jesus was an ambiguous figure - you could experience him and conclude that he was insane, as his family did, or that he was simply eccentric, or that he was a dangerous threat - or you could conclude that he was filled with the Spirit of God."*

At least we can conclude: he was many things at once.

Meier :

> *"He was a no-account Galileean in conflict with Jerusalem aristocrats; he was (relative to his opponents) a poor peasant in conflict with the urban rich; he was a charismatic wonderworker in conflict with priests very much concerned about preserving the central institutions of their religion and their smooth operation; he was an eschatological prophet promising the coming of God's kingdom in conflict with Sadducean politicians having a vested interest in the status quo. But underneath many of these conflicts lay another conflict; he was a religiously committed layman who seemed to be threatening the power of an entrenched group of priests."*

Crossan :

"Jesus was a Jew with an attitude."

"Imagine..these responses from different observers, all of whom have heard and seen exactly the same phenomena in the life of Jesus : He's dumb, let's ignore him. He's lost, let's leave him. He's dangerous, let's fight him. He's criminal, let's execute him. He's divine, let's worship him."

> *" But his work was among the houses and hamlets of Lower Galilee. His strategy, implicitly for himself and explicitly for his followers, was the combination of free healing and common eating, a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power. And, lest he himself be interpreted as simply the new broker of a new God, he moved constantly, settling down neither at Nazareth nor at Capernaum. He was neither broker nor mediator but, somewhat paradoxically, the announcer that neither should exist between humanity and divinity or between humanity and itself. Miracle and parable, healing and eating were calculated to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God an unmediated physical and spiritual contact with one another. He announced in other words the unmediated or brokerless Kingdom of God."*

[At least we can conclude that he was very significantly different....]

There are still many things here: how do they add up in the real Jesus? Can we clarify the picture?

Economic, political, social context.

Galilee itself is a fertile place: there is no reason why people there should be poor. Just before Jesus' time, the Roman Empire had sent its Army to Palestine and conquered it : the Army remained there as an occupying force. They tried to force the Jews there to live like Romans. They destroyed the local economy, and the local culture.

They did this through a massive building program (of sports arenas, amphitheatres, and things the Jews found foreign). They paid for all this by taxing the local people exorbitantly. As a result they got into debt, lost the freehold of their small farms, and were forced to work - on land that was really their own - as virtual slaves of Roman absentee landlords. To make ends meet, they got into second jobs, working on the building sites. The Jews were in trouble. They were living under the totalitarian rule of Rome, which was like a transnational corporation. They were compromised by their own local politicians, who collaborated with the Romans.

There was a very very small upper class – Romans, officers in the army, and some politically minded Jewish collaborators. In Galilee they lived in cities like Sepphoris and Tiberias.

There was no middle class, as we talk about it.

There was a very very large lower class – made up of peasants, artisans, the unclean, the expendable. This in all was about 95% of the population. The Romans created it, and made it worse and worse. They took away the simple agrarian economy, and tried to change the culture.

These people are the vast majority of the population. Other groups are the exceptions. They are a product of what the Romans did. They are empoverished, not naturally poor. They are poor because of the rich, who are rich at their expense. They were marginalised, because they did not fulfill the requirements for human living dictated by the ruling Roman culture.

For the Jews, this was religiously offensive: God had given them their culture and their land.

There were responses from the Jewish people. Broadly, these responses belong to what is called *'Messianism'*. The people hoped some Saviour or Messiah would come and restore their good times.

There were three kinds of this Messianism: e*conomic, pietistic, and relational.* The best example of the first kind, is Herod Antipas. The best example of the second kind, is John the Baptist. The best example of the third kind, is Jesus of Nazareth.

Herod Antipas.

Galilee was not under direct Roman rule in Jesus' time. The three major Jewish uprisings against Rome come well after Jesus' time: under Nero, 66-74, Trajan, 115-117, and Domitian, 132-135.

The three Herods (Great[43], Antipas, Agrippa)
Antipas, (lifetime of Jesus)
b. 20 bce, son of Herod (Idumean father) and Samaritan mother, raised a pampered prince in palaces (Jerusalem, Jericho, Masada, Caesarea), educated in Rome;
after 6 ce, gets Perea and Galilee;
sees himself as single leader-patron ('king') of all Palestine - wants to be a roman-jewish Messiah
uses scriptural prophecies about himself
has triumphal processions to Jerusalem
grandiose model of Messianism
building programmes (taxes) (no work)
note - Tiberias (ce 14+) not Sepphoris
economic development at the monetary and cultural expense of poor
first marriage, to Nabatean princess;
second marriage, to Herodias
whose father was one of his half-brothers,
who was already married to another half-brother,
who was Hasmonean/Maccabean (good jewish blood)
like David marrying Michol ?
(or Ahab marrying a new Jezebel ?)

No Roman armies stationed in Galilee then.
No insurrection against Antipas.
But a depressed people.....

From all this we see that Jesus appeared in a land in a state of religious resistance in the face of the foreign occupation of the Romans. The agenda was to save the religious traditions in the danger of contamination by Greek-Roman culture.

Today, there are national and international policies, and indeed some church policies, that try to give the world a decent living solely through economic development. They are not far from the position of Antipas.

John the Baptist.

keen awareness of the 'lostness' of the people
advocate of Messianism through religious renewal
less a spirituality promoter than an institutional critic
less a revivalist preacher than a ritualist
less a reviver of old rituals than an inventor of a new
ritual way of life - to re-enter the land, (through the Jordan), claim it, and live worthily in it
less general (human and religious) values than land rights
the real meaning of his 'metanoia'
the real issue when JB criticised Antipas' marriage..
economic salvation won't work

Today, there are spiritual movements that try to give the world a decent living solely through spiritual renewal. They are not far from the position of John.

Jesus was for a short time a disciple of John, and worked with and for him. Not with JB till in his thirties. Decided to leave family, occupation, town....despite shame...for a purpose

Then he opted to leave him, and began his own distinctive work.

Jesus of Nazareth : a Messianism that is relational, all-inclusive, based on God's Justice

RELATIONAL MESSIANISM

Jesus opposed grandiose, or economic, messianism (Antipas) like JB,
but also- in his maturity- differed from JB - he did not pursue religious-ritual-messianism, but initiated a relational messianism.

He is both anti-messianist and messianist in a very new way: both anti-political (anti-Roman) and political in a very new way; both anti-religious (anti-mere ceremonial and remote religiousness) and religious in a new way. He was showing them a different way of being a Jew and living the Covenant. In many ways he was perfecting the tradition of Jewish Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon 7 and Sirach 24), not a tradition of Hellenistic Cynicism.

ALL INCLUSIVE MESSIANISM

JESUS **identified indiscriminately with the little people, without boundaries and barriers, in a wholly inclusive relationship** (seemingly as a result of a meditated spiritual experience after his baptism.) He discovered that God did too, and that when everyone lived like this, the Kingdom of God happened - manifested in healings and mealings, and spoken about in parables etc. All this restored and revitalised the hillside and lakeside village traditions of sharing, which amounted to living the covenant in practice.

asked men to leave families and become itinerant
let unchaperoned women join the travelling entourage
had a joyful upbeat ministry
with an eschatological accent (metanoia)
end of the present order of things.....
like Elijah come back

It is a non-elite vision of an egalitarian distributive system, in the social solidarity of a people that sees itself as travelling like pilgrims into a better future.

> The Jesus that emerges here, overall, is not a cultured and pious, or 'nice' person, who supports
>
> authority systems, religious or political. He is a non-violent resister, but he is a resister.

All-inclusive relationship is the core of the 'offering' of Jesus to the people. This is at once a less spiritual view than that of Vermes or Borg, for instance, and a less political view than that of Horsley, Crossan and most others today.

The difference is that while I see the all-inclusiveness message actually anchored in a concrete situation in Galilee in the first century, I do not see the concept of it as contained therein or limited thereby. It seems rather to be bigger than any particular context. I am increasingly seeing Jesus in this position for its own sake, and not primarily or exclusively for the sake of political consequences that might actually flow from it.

> **The 'opponent' of Jesus is not so much the totalitarianism of Rome, as the absoluteness of any totalitarian system, which soon becomes a false God. In fact, the Roman situation was historically the one that revealed this much larger problem.**

BECAUSE OF THE JUSTICE OF GOD

Jesus advocated a *'covenantal* kingdom'.
God is just.
The land of Israel belongs to the just God.
The land was originally distributed justly by God to the tribes.
> Torah and Prophets are against the human drive for fewer and fewer people to have more and more land, and for more and more people to have less and less land.

The land cannot be sold: only the Lord owns it.
Debts must be controlled, less land be lost.
by forbidding interest.
by controlling collateral.
by remitting indebtedness.
by liberating enslavement.
by reversing dispossession.
(cf. Sabbath, Jubilee)
It is this kind of justice, seen in commerce-limitation and poverty-elimination, that creates all inclusive relationship, and covenant, and is the object of worship.
Eventually, this 'Kingdom' will come (eschatology).
Hopefully, this 'Kingdom' is coming soon-now (apocalyptic).

> Burton Throckmorton says that the Kingdom means that God over-rules nothing, but restores the original peace of creation and sustains it. A creation theology underlies this position.

Conclusion.

So – who was Jesus? A Jew with an attitude. An attitude of openness to all, in relationship, based on his sense that all have a right to this from God, in God's justice. That is the way he lived, and wanted others to live. And, as we shall see through the week, that is why others did not like him, and got rid of him, and that is why God raised him from the dead to continue his advocacy of justice in the world. I hope it will be through us.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED IN HOLY WEEK? A 'SCRIPT'

Jesus came from a small village (Nazareth) in rural Galilee, as an adult, he used Capernaum as his home-base. For at least a year he had gone around the countryside and the lakeside, reaching out to common people, including in a special way the impoverished and outcasts, the unpopular and the downtrodden of his time. He had a following, probably a hundred or two at most at any given time. He was a something of a phenomenon in the limited area of Galilee. [Popular prophets tended to make ruling authorities nervous – sound government requires crowd control. John the Baptist is a good example. In Galilee, Antipas did not like him and wanted to get rid of him. Others, like Jesus, knew this…]

Sunday

On an April Sunday in the year 30, probably April 2nd by our counting, Jesus came to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. He came along the valley from the east. He was danced into the city by pilgrims. He received a hero's welcome. People lined the roadway leading to Jerusalem. They waved branches.

[At Passover Jerusalem was a madhouse of between 200,000 and 400,000 extra people. There was inadequate sanitation. And not enough food and water. They stayed for about two and a half weeks, for passover itself and for temple services.]

The ones who knew about Jesus (mostly Galileeans on pilgrimage) were singing about the coming of the Kingdom of God. There were other, better known kingdoms. That of Herod, that of Caesar (or, Rome, the empire). They were very different from the Kingdom of Jesus's God. The Kingdom of God meant what life would be like if Jesus' God were palpably present in it, making things happen in a new way for the poor and oppressed. It is the opposite to the kingdom of Rome. It is consequently a direct challenge to that kingdom and to every other totalitarian system. It is a promise of freedom from illness, poverty and oppression – the side-effects of the other kingdoms. The 'kingdom of God' was the one term that might make the Romans listen. They thought (rightly) that *they* were the kingdom of a (different) god. They and their 25 legions. When Jesus and his people talk about their kingdom of their God, they are saying 'in your face' to Caesar and his system (and all other such systems). It was not a meek and mild thing to say. It was a frontal attack on the oppressor. Right in Jerusalem. Right at Passover.

Another man was arriving in Jerusalem on the same afternoon, from the west, in a military procession, on horseback, with hundreds of troops. His name was Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect, or governor, appointed to collect taxes and maintain order in the remote outpost of Judea. His job depended on his keeping things quiet. He was there to keep everything (crowd circulation especially) as low-key as possible. He would have seen any popular movements as a threat to stability. He was a career man in the military, not a judge or lawyer. He resided at the seaside resort city of Caesarea. On special occasions he made the 40 mile march to Jerusalem to do crowd control. He probably hated going there. He may have heard that there was someone from Galilee who was there stirring up some crowds. He may have been ill-tempered as a result.

Joseph Caiaphas had been high priest of the temple for years, an aristocrat appointed by Rome and controlled by Pilate. He is a collaborator. If he can't keep things quiet, Pilate will remove him from office. And probably Pilate will lose his office too. He hears about Jesus. He checks him out.

Monday

All three men are in the city – Caiaphas, Pilate, Jesus. Jesus goes to the temple. It was a great, sprawling compound that was the political heart of the city and the most sacred place in the Jewish world. It was bustling with people. They were getting ready for Passover. They were purchasing lambs. They were on holiday. They were excited. They were tense, too. Passover was a liberation feast. They got out from Egypt in the old days through a 'passover': when would they get out from Rome through another one?

Almost anything could cause a stampede, and it would be dangerous. A Passover riot in Jerusalem thirty years earlier had left 3,000 Jews slaughtered by the Romans. It was zero toleration time for any disturbance of the peace. The Roman soldiers, and the temple police controlled by Caiaphas, are on guard.

Jesus moves in and out of the temple precincts – with some of his following. His claims were that ruling priests were insensitive to the needs of the poor and were getting money out of them unjustly in the name of religion.

They were living like aristocrats on those benefits. Jesus is not on the side of the elite. He is seen to be on the side of those who were oppressed by the elite.

Jesus was in the outer court of the temple. The stalls were bustling with merchants. They were changing the pilgrims' money into the required temple coins. They were selling pigeons and lambs for Passover. Jesus stormed into the area, overturned the tables, and cast the vendors out. It was an act of protest. It was a symbolic gesture (something like pouring blood on draft cards). It would not change much publicly. But it would make a religious statement: that this is not justice as God practises it.

Tuesday/Wednesday

His verbal threats get more explicit. The crowds get bigger. He says the very stones of the temple will be destroyed. For Pilate, this is a serious offence, not only to the Jewish authorities, but to the Romans who had conquered the temple: any man who would make it is subject to immediate arrest. For Caiaphas, there is a double bind: he wants to mininise a possible crowd reaction in favour of Jesus, and he wants to minimise Jewish bloodshed as a result of an intemperate move from Pilate. He takes a decision to use his own temple police and bring Jesus in. He lets Pilate know: he hopes to keep Pilate from quick action against the crowds. He is saying to Pilate: there is no need for intervention, I can handle it.

Thursday

Jesus had a final meal with his friends. Later, on return to the Mount of Olives, as he was praying in an olive grove (called Gethsemane) across the valley from the temple, a posse of temple guards (with the connivance and perhaps the presence of Roman soldiers) surrounded him. They had never seen Jesus before. They did not know which one was he, until he was identified by one of Jesus' men. He was ambushed. He was arrested.

A Jewish 'trial' as dramatised in the gospels is unlikely, even perhaps impossible. It would be like having a Supreme Court meeting twice between Christmas evening and the morning of Christmas. Was there a scaled down proceeding? A hearing? There does seem to have been lack of agreement among his captors about what to do with him, and as a result some discussion, possibly in his presence. Beat him, and throw him out of town? Jail him till after Passover? Hand him over to the Romans? Caiaphas (who did not have the right of capital punishment or did not want to appeal to it) seems to have been looking for evidence that would convince Pilate to order the man's execution. It seems likely that Caiaphas thought this was the best expedient to keep trouble down. Did he find that evidence? Jesus had said things that were high treason in terms of the kingdom of Rome, but he was hardly an actual threat to its legions. Caiaphas is taking the option of a precautionary first strike. In any case, as dawn broke on Friday, Jesus was handed over to Pilate.

Friday

Jesus has been arrested, interrogated, imprisoned, bound, and led through the streets to Pilate. He is an expendable in the presence of the great Roman, the representative of the almighty Caesar. Pilate's options are many: imprison him over the weekend, murder him in any way he likes. He has sent people to death many times before. Well, Jesus is using language that threatens Caesar – it is a capital offense. But it is language that Pilate does not, and cannot understand. It is hard to know what actually happened then – the gospels have dramatised it for their own purposes. Those who cared about Jesus probably did not actually know what took place: those who knew did not particularly care about Jesus.

Jesus, a few days ago, was so popular that the crowds danced him into the city. He was so popular that he had to be arrested by night, in an ambush. Yet, by next morning, there's seemingly a hostile crowd screaming for his death? Not likely. [Most Jewish people didn't even know who Jesus was and never heard about him, and would have been horrified at what happened to him….] Pilate – was he the kind of man who would he be swayed by whims of any crowd? He was an unyielding tyrant known for cruelty and executions without trial. He would not give in to a crowd. He controlled crowds by slaughter. He is not a good governor who finally gives in to accommodate a political spectrum. He does not have open court with the people. He does not act to please Jewish priests. In the end, he sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. This is not a rare thing. Many thousands were crucified in the Land, by the Romans, a few decades before and after Jesus. It was a case of state torture, to get rid of someone and to give the rest a salutary lesson.

The manner of crucifixion was up to the whim of the execution squad. Usually they beat and scourged the person, to weaken him. It was designed to humiliate as well as to cause suffering. It was done to tens of thousands of people all across the Roman Empire.

In the crowded streets with pilgrims everywhere and people looking out of the houses and shops, the soldiers are brutally clearing the way. Everyone knew what was happening. Crucifixion was a public warning: act like Jesus, and this is the result. Jesus probably carried only the horizontal beam of the cross. Anything more would have been too heavy for a man beaten and scourged.

They took him to an abandoned quarry and limestone pit, called Golgotha. There were upright sections of crosses in place there, used many times before. A small crowd, kept at some distance by the soldiers, were spectators. Sometime on Friday (around midday or in mid-afternoon) he died there.

Easter

Nowadays we think immediately of the following Sunday morning, the morning of his resurrection. But no one saw his rising.

Imagine a scene (not recorded, but very realistic).,involving two groups of people. A group of believers in Jesus at home in Galilee. No news about Jesus since he went south to Jerusalem for Passover. About three or four weeks ago. And a small group of disciples who went with Jesus for Passover, who were there in Jerusalem on the Friday, and who got out and left for home immediately on the Saturday morning, before there was any news there of resurrection, or talk of empty tombs, or apparitions. It took them perhaps ten or fifteen days, perhaps more, to get home. News didn't travel fast in those days. No one had heard anything yet in Galilee. They got home and said: did you hear what happened? *What*? They got him, they killed him, he's dead. *No! You're wrong... it can't be right. We don't believe you.* They said: well, we were there. *No: you must be wrong.... he has been here, with us, enabling us to do the things he used to do here: to heal the sick, to raise the spirits of downcast people, to make us come together and have meals and enjoy our presence with one another. In fact, you know, we've been doing it more than ever these last couple of weeks. We feel he has been more with us, and more powerful in us, than he ever was. He can't be dead. He's working in us here. Of course he's alive. He's here!* And then it dawned on them.... **They killed him all right, but he still lives...**

When the stories finally came, months, maybe even a year or so later, about appearances, they said, yes, we already know...we've felt his power...

When the story was written up (some thirty or forty years later) about the empty tomb, and the stone rolled away on Sunday morning, they had already known for a long time…

10. A THEOLOGY OF REDEMPTION: PAUL

I would like here, to suggest some nuances in the interpretation of Paul and redemption. Theology distinguishes between objective and subjective redemption. Objective redemption means what Jesus has done for us all. Subjective redemption means the process of our integration into what Jesus has done for us all. Paul has his own slant on the former, but is much more interested in the latter. I will retain that emphasis here. Almost all commentators stress the experience Paul had on the road to Damascus as the core of his experience of redemption: I agree. They also stress the way he tried to integrated the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus: I agree again. The issue is the way he did this.

Over the last half century there has been a massive change in the reading of Paul. Fifty years ago, Paul was understood principally in the light of debate between the Reformation and Catholicism.
The reformers had interpreted the burning issues of Paul's day in the light of their own struggle against legalism. They had opted for their own reading of Augustine here, and identified with his struggles. They had inherited the framework of late medieval piety, which had been a legal 'norm' for ordinary people. They wanted to get under this, in the name of deep personal faith-experience. So they read Paul as fighting for grace against law. In doing so they made a caricature of Judaism as a religion of legalism.[44]

Challenges came to this: friom Montefiore (a Jew), from G.F.Moore (an Englishman). But the real shift came with the work of Ed Sanders (Paul and Palestinian Judaism). He coined the expression, 'covenantal nomism' to mean that human obedience of any kind can never be a means of entering God's covenant. That can't be earned. It is always pure gift, grace.

Krister Stendahl (a Lutheran bishop at Harvard) showed that Paul did not experience the unrelenting introspection that became so characteristic of Western man after Augustine. He never had the acute psychological dilemma characteristic of the Augustinian-Lutheran interpretation as a whole. He had a clear conscience! He never languished in guilt… He never blamed his ego, he always blamed Sin. He was not protesting against self-righteous efforts to merit God's favour.
Once Stendahl disclosed that, the question was: what was Paul really up against?

Ed Sanders suggested that Paul experienced the solution before the problem. The solution is *universal salvation in Christ.* If that is true, then salvation does not and cannot come through the law, through any law. Sanders showed that the real argument for Paul was a refusal of the need to be Jewish to be in order to be integrated into the covenant. Salvation in Christ was a universal gift, a grace of copious redemption.

James Dunn coined the phrase 'the new perspective on Paul' (1982). It is not the law itself that Paul criticised, but its misuse, not so much as a way of earning grace, but as a social mrker of privilege, a social barrier. The misuse comes out most in what Paul meant by the 'works of the law'. The works of the law were what identified a person as a Jew. They were seen as badges of membership…. E.g. circumcision, food laws.

Tom Wright (What Paul really said) insisted that the core of Paul's gospel was not justification (by faith) but the *death and resurrection of Jesus.* Justification is not the centre of Paul's thought, but an outworking of it. The pre-Christian Saul was not a pious proto-Pelagian Jewish (or Pharisaic) moralist seeking to earn his individual passage to heaven. He was not even primarily interested in 'going to heaven when he died'. He was rather a zealous Jewish nationalist whose driving concern was to cleanse Israel of Gentiles as well as of Jews who had lax attitudes to the Torah. When he became a Christian, he maintained the Jewish shape of his thought, but filled it with new content. He had discovered that God's covenant-faithfulness, already given to Israel, was definitively revealed in Jesus's death and resurrection. And in the churches who lived differently as a result.

[44] This was in the classic texts from Ferdinand Weber, to Emil Schurer, to Wilhelm Bousset, to Rudolf Bultmann. It was very 'Lutheran' to think like that, and very 'German'.

It is now, with the emphasis on relationship to Roman Imperial Theology that Horsley, Wright, Crossan and Reed (and others) have given us, that we are beginning to put flesh on the above bones…

Paul is a Jew, born and bred,[45] and he knew and spoke Hebrew. He would have had a first class Jewish education at the synagogue of Tarsus. He would have been trained in apologetics for Judaism, and polemics against paganism (= roman religion). He would have been given Greek/Roman education too, in the paideia. He was probably not a Pharisee, not educated under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, not a 'citizen' of Tarsus, not a Roman citizen. [This other view of Paul comes from *Luke in Acts*: the option taken here is not to trust the Lukan narrative very much for accurate historical data, and to rely on what Paul says about himself in his letters, and leave out what he does not say.] Early in his adult life, Paul knew about new Jewish groups who believed in a man called Jesus. He looked on Christian Jews as Jews (with special beliefs). Some of them, at least, included pagans. He objected strongly to the inclusion of pagans in these young Jewish-Christian communities. He persecuted their communities for being too open in this way – true Jews should not be so open, no matter what they thought about Jesus. [After his conversion, this is the very thing he advocated!] He probably did not have an authorisation from high priests in Jerusalem to persecute such Jews in Damascus. He went to Damascus, under his own initiative, when it was under Nabatean control, under King Aretas. The Jerusalem priesthood would hardly have had much authority or influence there, and the Christian Jewish groups he persecuted were not totally conforming to the demands of the Jerusalem priesthood.

On the road to Damascus (without that formal warrant) he had an apparition that led to a revelation that led to a conversion that led to a vocation. He was not blinded or struck deaf and dumb. He *saw* Jesus and *heard* his voice. He had never previously met or known him. But he knew from others something of the story of Jesus, and he knew it was somehow because of Jesus that they were open to receiving Gentiles. He knew especially that Jesus had been crucified. *He now saw the living Jesus still actually bearing the wounds of crucifixion, wounded-glorified. The vision changed him. If even death-by-crucifixion could be included and swept up into a more abundant life, why not allow a community that believed this, to welcome all life – even pagans - in the name of that Living One? This seems to be what he 'heard' from Jesus.*

'Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?' 1 Cor 9,1
'Christ…was seen also by me' 1 Cor 15,8
'Faith comes from what is heard: what is heard comes from word of Christ' Rm 10,17

Paul never ceased to believe that Israel had been chosen by God as the spearhead of God's action in the world. He believed in the God-givenness of Israel's vocation to be the people of God for the world. He believed Abraham was in a much more privileged position than Adam. He saw Israel as the faith-people of God, and as the hope of a better humanness than Adam had handed down, and than was around at this point of history. <u>But he had discovered Christ (and him crucified)</u>. He redrew the picture of what was meant by Israel, in God's design, in terms of him. He now knew that in God's design Israel was meant to be transformed by the Christ event (of crucifixion-resurrection), meant to be turned inside out by it. He knew that <u>a new people</u> (made up of some Jews and some Gentiles, from wherever, it did not matter) was now <u>the real people of faith</u>, the true Israel, the climax of the old one. As a result his relationship with non-Messianic Judaism was ambivalent. He never ceased to believe that unbelieving Israel was still God's people (and not one of the nations), but he never wavered in his conviction that without inner transformation through faith in Christ crucified-and-risen it was no longer the real thing, and could not do its job. The question is: what was the real heart of Israel? It wanted rightly to be a people through whom God would put the world to rights, and show men and women how to be human. Paul said: but it cannot now do that except through faith in the risen Christ and precisely in his crucifiedness-risenness. Historically, Israel never expected its own vocation to be specified like that!

[45] There is no discussion about his birth place, and it is assumed to be Tarsus. Murphy -O'Connor accepts a stray suggestion from St.Jerome that it was Gischala in Galilee,the family being deported into slavery in 4 bce, and gaining their freedom later, and with it Roman citizenship. Paul himself makes no mention anywhere of a Roman citizenship. Luke produces it as a rabbit out of a hat to get out of two tight corners. Is it compatible with Phariseeism?

In reaction to Paul, Israel continued to use its older God-given symbols (Torah, food laws, etc) as a way to protect itself against the nations, and indeed against Paul and his Crucified-Messianists. Paul thought that this was about as necessary as leaving candles lit after sunrise. In fact, he thought it was a form of idolatry, and deserved Israel's own critique of paganism. Israel had not really recognised the true and proper object of its own faith.

Paul set up new covenant communities and modelled the new vision.[46] He made old Israel jealous! He never really gave up the hope that the old Israel would see the point. That is why he took up the collection for the poor of Jerusalem. He thought God was acting to transform both the people he now lived with, and the people from which he had come, into one wider community. He longed to see that day.

Paul belonged to Christ, crucified-risen. 'Christ crucified' meant a man who had experienced the depth of death and come through, knowing that life was too strong for death, and that the acceptance of death made real or imagined death powerless over him any more. Paul belonged to that paschal process: 'Christ crucified' was his symbol for it. He once stood on a spot near Philippi, looking southwest into a valley where Antony and Octavian had defeated the republican forces. He crossed that valley, and took on the full forces of imperial religion itself… It was the cross-roads (in several senses) of religious history, and of the history of civilisation.

He was not called to be, and did not become, a missionary sent from Jerusalem through Antioch, with the blessing and mandate of James and Peter. He became *an apostle sent directly from the God of Jesus through the living Jesus himself.* He did not preach to the Jews initially and primarily, and was not rejected by them for trying to convert their own group. He did not - as a result of his failure to convert them – then turn to the pagans (Gentiles). He was the apostle of crucified-risenness. There was a social group who could hear him. He *went directly and mainly to them, the ' God-worshippers', who were very numerous, devout Greeks, including many of the leading women of the cities.* [He met them around the Jewish synagogues, where they came anyway because they already believed in the Jewish God – but never became Jews.]

When a Jew became a Christian, that Jew still worshipped the same God. When a pagan became a God-worshipper, that pagan had to change his/her gods, to give up false gods, who were idols, including worship of the Emperor. That pagan also had to give up a concept of humanness that – because of service to idols – was self-destructing. Pagan worship and religion was at best a parody of truth. The people Paul addressed himself to, had already done all this. He wanted to show them where to go from there. He wanted to take them to the crucified-risen One.

He is primarily their pastor, as they journey towards that end. He writes letters to them as part, and only part, of his pastoral care for them.

Paul's earliest letter is to the Thessalonian community. They had a question about resurrection, about risenness. To understand what Paul said to them, we first need a digression about resurrection.

J.D.Crossan, The resurrection of Jesus in its Jewish context, Neotestamentica 2003, 29-67.

[46] It is interesting to reflect that Paul worked with small groups from the bottom up, not with large (universal) groups from the top down, as the empire did. He did this because only a small group grasped and lived the new dynamics he demanded. It was not a case of small groups using 'imperial' dynamics. He was not fine-tuning the Roman system, he was rejecting it as a system and as a religion. His groups believed in a different God who cared: and as a result were built on the dynamics of sharing together, and mutual support and helpfulness and outreach.

In a post-Enlightenment world, we tend to argue that resurrection is either impossible (if we don't believe it), or at best a unique privilege for Jesus (if we do believe it) - how very nice for him…. In a pre-Enlightenment first century Jewish world, the real issue is the relevance of resurrection. Why care about it? Why call what happened to Jesus a 'resurrection'? Why not settle for 'exaltation' or some other word? Why insist on 'risen'-ness?

Prior to the first century of the common era, almost all Jews disbelieved in an after-life. They had heard about it. They branded it as a pagan idea, that usurped the transcendent rights of their God. They positively rejected it. Sheol meant Never No More. Life here is enough, and all you get. All sanctions for good and evil happen here. Not later. Not afterwards.

In actual Jewish history, things worked out very often in ways that were harsh for Jews. Israel often thought it must be sinful and was being permanently punished here in its history. It was always asking forgiveness. Deuteronomic theology (for all the positive aspects of it) worked out a theory of these external, historical punishments of Israel by its God… Only the covenant saved it from extinction.

Things changed with the problems of (Maccabean) martyrs for Jewish faith in the mid second century bce. Up till then it was thought that Jewish heroes were always or most often saved by God before and from death. But these heroes were dead. How could they be saved? Here is where the word *'resurrection'* came in. There might be a 'resurrection' from death itself into an 'afterlife'. It was not for all, only for martyrs. It was bodily – full and real salvation of the whole person. It was not about a survival for them. It was about the justice of God, who needed in justice to give them a public visible bodily vindication, otherwise God would not look just and would not be honouring the covenant. [Note: in one or other text of 4 Macc, around 100 bce, martyral death is seen not on the model of the noble death of Socrates, but on the model of the vicariously atoning death of the suffering servant in second Isaiah. But this is very rare.] In this early stage, some imaginative pagan ideas of afterlife coloured Jewish thinking. They had no patterns of their own.

From this beginning of a vague idea of resurrection, came *major developments*. In the justice of God, there would be a final eschatological event leading to a final utopia *here on earth*. The eschaton and the utopia go together. God would have to do this: God couldn't really think of annihilating earth, or space and time. So the final situation is not a heaven replacing earth, but heaven *transforming earth, this earth*. It is not a case of destroying space and time. It is a case of *destroying violence and unrighteousness here*. That is the transformation.

There was a problem about *Gentiles*. The above was ok for Jews, because of the covenant. What about pagans? Two theories. One, God will destroy them all in the final war at Mt.Megiddo. Two, God will *convert them all (to God, not to the historical Israel) for the final banquet at Mt.Zion.* It is probable that James of Jerusalem held the second view, which let him allow uncircumcised males into full fellowship and table fellowship in the first Christian community there. [So Paula Fredriksen].

Views of resurrection were developed to fit in with either of the above theories about Gentiles. In the second view, *resurrection occurred to allow the resurrected to share in the final banquet.*

It is necessary to say that resurrection so understood is not the same as bodily resuscitation. [In Jewish thinking, you were really dead and gone after three days…]. Also to say that resurrection is not the same as, or proved by, post-mortem apparitions of the deceased: that is a well-known and non-pathological phenomenon. It doesn't constitute or prove resurrection. Also to say that 'exaltation' (even into 'heaven', or 'being with God') is not the same as resurrection. [Enoch had heavenly exaltation…] Resurrection was dressing up for the definitive banquet.

Why did the early believers pick the word 'resurrection' to describe what happened to Jesus who had been crucified?

To answer that we have to mention some still *further developments* in the very idea of resurrection. We have seen so far that it is a final event, to make everyone ready for the final banquet. It is clear that resurrection is then *a general resurrection,* or it doesn't exist at all. It is not a personal privilege given to one or other, or a few. It is everybody. A new development occurs: *it is not an instant or moment. It is a period and a process. A global one.* In other words, the end is here and is already beginning, for all. Now. Here. Not just later on Mt.Zion!

Resurrection is a process of the destruction of violence and injustice, to make the world what God wants it to be. To make it a utopia.

In one way this idea is not so new. Jesus, without perhaps using the word resurrection, had said as much. He said the kingdom of God is already here in our midst. [Paul would say that God's new creation is with us now.]

The problem was, and still is, to find and offer to others *some visible, tangible evidence* that this is so. Evidence really of *a resurrection process at work now all round.*

Imagine Paul trying to make a case for it. He is talking to a polite pagan colleague in a leather or canvass shop where they work. He is talking to the woman who owns the shop. He tells them that the source of injustice and violence is the empire. It is imperial power. He tells them God does not believe in that. God believes in universal distributive justice. So what God does is always negating and destroying what the empire does. And so transforming the world into its intended future. But how can he *convince his hearers that this is actually happening?*

He tells them that a small group of people who believe this, and act accordingly in justice, meet for 'prayer' in a sardine shop on the next corner before it opens for business each morning. Once a week they have a longer meeting. Then they share half of all they have made during the previous week, and all the food they bring. They share it with anyone and everyone who comes along. This is the opposite of elite 'club' gatherings in the empire. They do that because they believe that all creation, and all the fruits of work, and all food, belong to the Lord (their God, not the emperor). They do that because they believe there is a dynamic at work in the world to distribute everything in a kind of justice that is the opposite of that of the empire. They believe that Jesus is Lord, and Jesus lived like this, and died at the hands of the empire because he lived like this, and God has enabled him to be alive living like this in and through those who believe in him, always, until the new world is fully made. That is why they call their meal the Lord's Supper. They do it as his memorial (zikkaron if you are a Jew, anamnesis if you are a Greek).

By the way, says Paul, there are little groups like this having these meetings and sharings and mealings, in every city of the empire. We're everywhere. The empire is finished in principle.
It's a new thing. It's not just more synagogues.

This experience itself has further developed the idea of resurrection: it's a process over time, it's transformative by destroying violence, it's against the imperial power, and Jesus started it. His resurrection isn't for him. It's the start of the general resurrection for all of us now. And God and Jesus ask us to participate actively in this general resurrection of the world by working for the conversion of the empire and of all systems of violence!

Yes, we will die. Jesus did. Martyrs did. We will be joined to Jesus, and to the martyrs, and keep the movement going as Jesus does now. Even the deceased of the past will be with Jesus and us in doing it. They come – as a cloud of witnesses - to the sardine shop every Sunday! The world will be new!

Paul replied to the Thessalonian problems with a statement about resurrection through a brilliant use of a well-known metaphor – an interpretation of resurrection in terms of the 'parousia' (imperial presence) of a conquering Roman emperor. Paul (and the kerygma) had been telling everyone that just as the Roman Emperor had a 'parousia' in each place he had conquered, so Jesus would have a final, determining Parousia everywhere. In it, those who had died (especially the martyrs, like those in Philippi – there had been some recently) would meet him first. [This is suggested by the fact that when the Emperor arrived in procession anywhere, he first went past the graves on the outskirts of the town.] They would go into the city with Jesus. <u>It was *not a case of their permanent relocation in heaven with Jesus, but of their cooperation with Jesus, and with those still alive in the city, in the transformation of the city here (socially and politically).*</u> For that, they would need renewed bodies – their own, because it was they themselves doing it, and renewed, because they were to participate in a new way in a whole new 'body' politic. There would only be one Parousia: there is only one process of transformation throughout the whole world. In fact, this process began with the resurrection of Jesus, and still goes on. <u>*'Resurrection' is then – in a typically Jewish way – seen as the general resurrection of all, but it is seen as a*</u>

process begun in the resurrection of Jesus. This would make the whole world a place of peace through justice. The result is love all round. Paul imagined a visible Parousia of Jesus to kick this along, seemingly within his own lifetime or that of his contemporaries. He was wrong about the dates. [Actually, he seems to have been a bit unsure of about dating it: he said it would be like a thief in the night, so that you couldn't guess a time for it.] But he had innovated with the basic idea. To see the general resurrection as a process already dynamically at work and in place, is *quite new in (Pharisaic) Judaism and early Christian thought.*

> 'So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation' Thess 5, 5-8

That is what he has come to grasp as the meaning of resurrection. In later writing, especially to the Galatians, he develops his thought on resurrection: it is not an instant, but an 'age'; it is not an 'act of God', but *a dynamism in which there is divine and human cooperation, with socio-political results in the present world.* [This is not what Jewish eschatology, or James, thought was going to happen in the future.] You don't theoretically believe in the resurrection of Jesus, you take part in the living process of general resurrection that began with Jesus, and you contribute to it. You, Jesus, God, everyone are all equally involved in that process, since you were all together under the curse-liberation of the law-system. You are now, all together, all equal, all free.

Later still, he admits that he was often in an altered state of consciousness, a kind of identification with Jesus, so that it did not matter whether he talked or thought about himself or Jesus: they were togethered. We see this in his writings from Ephesus, for example to the Philippians. This he called his 'consolation'. It must have been somewhat visible to others, and we can imagine the Romans thinking it was one more manifestation of eastern ecstatic religion. Paul is *a mystic, and an ecstatic. With a mysticism and an ecstasy that can only come through the cross, which liberates from all other forms of mysticism and ecstasy, as it liberates from all forms of domination (imperial or Torah).*[47]

It is precisely in his suffering that Paul experiences this. He may have thought that one day he might experience something like this union with Jesus, positively, when he would have achieved the work of his apostolate and unified God-worshippers and Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. It didn't work out like that. Instead, the Romans 'got' him. It was *a kenosis, an emptying out of his apostolic dreams.* Somehow he knew Jesus was like that too, and somehow he knew that God and the Spirit were like that too. It was not in going up to the seventh heaven (or higher?) but in going down kenotically to the Roman prisons that the whole mystery was taking place. *This – not some imagination – was the general resurrection process alive and at work.* All Christians were called into living it. Now. Here. This way.

We need, as usual, to come back to the basic conflict in Paul's life and work. In general terms, the Roman model was one of patronal community (leading to inequality and competition), while Paul's model was one of kenotic community (leading to equality and cooperation). More specifically, it is in the dialogue with Corinth that Paul goes even further than he had done in prison at Ephesus, in his own personal thinking, with his understanding of divine action in the world. The Roman thinking focussed on human standards, or that which is human, according to the flesh, or fleshly, in this age, that is, on the normalcy of civilisation. It prioritised wisdom and the wise, power and the powerful, strength and the strong. *Paul's thinking continued to focus on foolishness and the*

[47] I do not think this altered consciousness need be understood in the same way as trance states in later Christian mystics. For Paul, it is always earthed into the political realities around him, as is Jesus through resurrection. There is always a both/and approach in Paul: Jesus-in-the-political-realities. He does not sublimate, he does not reduce, he holds both together. Which, for him, is mysticism.

foolish, weakness and the weak – and he increasingly included himself here. The first four chapters of First Corinthians are like an extended commentary on the hymn of Philippians 2, 6-11. The *kenotic process of Jesus's God and the general resurrection seems to provoke and use weakness for its purposes.* It is much less dramatic than being crucified – it is just being unable to handle the everyday! And this is the 'process of resurrection'! Paul can even come, in Second Corinthians 11, 23-33, to 'boast' of this weakness in himself….

> 'Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman – I am a better one: with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a day and a night I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked…If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness…' 2 Cor 11,23-33

There is one example of this. It is the coming together of Corinthian Christians for *the Lord's Supper*. Some powerful patrons among them hosted these gatherings and assemblies. Much like a Greek-Roman patronal banquet. They had a full meal. But there were two ways of proceeding. One was doing it in your own style, bringing your own goods, and eating them privately with your own sub-group. The other was doing in the Lord's supper's true style, sharing everything with everybody. That is what really befitted the new creation. It is easy to guess Paul's feelings here, but *in his new 'weakness' he can't get away with his views. He has to compromise.* So he asks the 'haves', if they need to, to eat at home first before they come! And he goes on to suggest that they break the bread early in the meal, and pass the cup around late in it, while they have their food (sub-groups or all-together) in-between these two rituals.

In his developed frame of mind, Paul has *another look at the resurrection*. His Corinthians were philosophically educated Platonists. They could accept the immortality of the spiritual soul, but when Paul talked about resurrection of the body they thought it was stupid. 'Appearances' of a risen Christ would not go over well with them either. Paul nuanced his thought. He began to see *the general resurrection process as a prelude to the final transformation of the whole world into its Omega State*: then there would be public justice for all, and it would be on earth as it is in heaven. He went on to stress that now, the general resurrection process has already begin and is in full swing: God through the living Jesus in us, and in our weakness, is finally cleaning up the world's mess. Jesus and ourselves (the 'body of Christ') are in this *with Spirit-empowered bodies ('spiritual bodies') now.* [He means our present real 'weak' bodies, used by the Spirit of transformation…to do real things in the present body-politic.] Especially when we are a true, sharing, Eucharistic communion. He goes further still, and seems to suggest that it is not physical or biological death that will eventually be overcome, but violence, especially violent death, so that in the end the martyrs are vindicated in God's Justice, and so is our weakness.[48]

The focus is not on 'crucifixion' any more, as it was earlier – he doesn't use the expression 'crucified Christ' in Romans. The focus is on death, but rather on life through death, that is, more on resurrection than on death. Paul then does another re-interpretation of resurrection, in line with his previous thinking. *He sees it not just as 'rising physically' but as 'rising up against the Romans'*. The kenotic movement of resurrection is, far from an ascension into heaven, a coming to terms with the socio-political realities of earth to heal them, and that means, dealing with the scandal of roman power. That power had brought violence, and indeed a violent death, to so many, including Jesus. *What the dynamic of continuing and 'returning' resurrection means is a healing of that violence.* The concern is less to take away 'death as such' than to take the violence out of death, out of all death. *You can be risen, in the process of resurrection, now, if you enter into the kenosis of powerlessness and heal the violence.* That is being redeemed, and that is redeeming the world. He can make this pitch to the God-worshippers who already believe in the Jewish God of Covenant: he can show them what this God is

[48] There is little attempt at a psychological portrayal of Paul. In contrast, Murphy-O'Connor has a number of remarks about it. He notes Paul's 'unchristian' sarcasm re Corinth, his tantrums, his mean asides, his 'acting like a glad-handing politician' or even 'a resentful and devious control-freak'. He does not think he wasted his time relating his ideas to philosophical concepts – he left that to Apollos.

paradoxically doing in the kenotic resurrection of Jesus and of God, into the world, against the Romans. He can use this pitch as polemic against the Jews, a polemic from one Jew to other Jews, in terms of the character of the Covenant God. They have not seen the kenosis, nor understood what they reject about resurrection, nor assumed their God-given mission of healing the violence through their lived weakness. I think it is in this context that Paul can object to 'works of the law' (within a system that doesn't see the real point) and 'works of faith' (within a vision that does).

Come back to God's original vision for the unity of the human world. Many groups, now separate, have been chosen for that ultimate unity. You could even talk, in Paul's mind, of many covenants. Among the Jews now, there is a remnant, and there is a non-remnant. Ultimately it doesn't matter. In practical living, there is a freedom and there is an openness to many situations: a time for paying taxes, a time for being martyred. There is a spirit of welcome and receiving all, and there is a collection taken up among Gentile Christians for poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

> 'Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
> Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present,
> Nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
> Will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rm 8,35, 37-39

This background helps us understand better Paul's statement about all this in the letter to the Romans, his last attempt to put words on it all.

The letter is about the 'gospel of God'. This means the force of God for the salvation of every believer. It is a revelation: the Father comes, with tenderness, to enter into conversation (as Dei Verbum 21 put it). Paul is a 'servant' of this gospel (in the mould of Isaiah's servant). His point is that Jesus is 'established' son of god by resurrection, in the role of saviour, in the power of God for salvation. In effect he is a pneuma zoopoioun. [Luther said this was the point of departure of the reformation.]

The justice of God is mentioned seven times in Romans. [Luther said he had a horror of the expression 'justice of God'.] The roots of the term lie not in the Hebrew din (equivalent to Greek krisis or krima) but in the Hebrew tsedaqa (equivalent to Greek dikaiosune). It is not an anger that gives rise to fear, but a justice that founds hope. John Chrysostom said that 'the justice of God is his philanthropy'. It is not conceived in opposition to the mercy of God. When you speak of human justice, you say it is done, or appeased, or tempered by mercy, but you do not talk like that about the justice of God. For Paul, the justice of god is equal to God's fidelity to us, which is essentially salvific, in virtue of God's unconditional promise to Abraham in Covenant (not a bilateral or conditional arrangement), and in relation to Christ, God's dearest Gift of Love to us. The justice of God is then the same as salvation, deliverance, mercy, love, and fidelity. It is not the same as human vindictive justice, it is divine salvific justice. This use by Paul is based on the use of the term in the psalms. It means the pardon of sin, the destruction of sin, the justification of human beings. The faith that saves is faith in this unextinguishable fidelity of God to the Covenant. There is also the expression, the 'justices of god', which means the high points or high deeds or mirabilia of God in working out our salvation.

In the early part of Romans, Paul goes into the world before Jesus Christ, or the world as it would be without Jesus Christ, without the revelation of the justice of God's salvific activity. Paul calls it the time of the anger of God.

In both the OT and the NT the anger of God is not an attribute of God. It is a metaphor for something going on in us, not in God. [God is said to be slow to anger, while we will be saved from anger, even if there will be a day of anger.] The point of the metaphor is to bring out the absolute incompatibility of God and sin. When we are in sin, we are in a state of incompatibility (from our side) with God. It is a way of bringing out the inescapable consequences of the human decision to sin. The 'anger' is not in God, but in the human being who refuses to love God and receive God's Love.

Human history in fact has meant the multiplication of sins. Humans are captive in that, and live in 'injustice'. This is how they are when left on their natural terms to go their own way.

Yet, even in this history, God revealed himself through creation – God revealed his intelligence, his works, his power, his divinity. This is seen in rain, in seasons, in fertility, in nourishment, in happiness, in life, in movement, in being. The problem with humanity, historically, prescinding from Jesus Christ, is that it refuses to give glory and thanks to God. Humanity isthen vain and void, and unintelligent and dark, in effect 'nothing': it then turns to idols (birds, quadripeds, snakes, golden calves) and tries to appease them by sacrifice. This means that humans put confidence in themselves (and their constructs) as self-sufficient. This is the source of all other sins. It is cupiditas (pleonexia). It is the exact antithesis of charity. It makes people sense-less, disloyal, heartless, pityless. Pity in these people has become self-pity and degenerated into weakness. As Isaiah said, the criminal is delivered into the hands of his crimes. It is with these humans that God, in Jesus, has made an eternal covenant! These are the people with whom God has entered into a quasi-nuptial bond, giving rise to the 'justice of God' to them…

What about the salvation of the pagans? [There were holy pagans in the scriptures. Job was not a Jew. The Ninevites to whom Jonah preached were not Jews.] This is a continuation of Paul's thoughts on the world before, without, or refusing Christ. No one can be saved without Christ. This is absolutely necessary. But you can be with Christ without knowing him, or knowing that you are with Him. If a real constancy in good is inscribed in the heart, then there is a true seeking of salvation. Such a person is a true Jew from the inside (not from the outside). Without Christ, Israel itself is exactly like the pagan world. Jews are meant to practice the Torah, not just know or study it. Practising it comes from a circumcision of the heart that can only be operated by God, and it creates the possibility of real love for neighbour, which is the point of all the laws of the Torah. So say Dt, Jr, Ez. People who are really like that are Christians without knowing it. Be they Jews or Gentiles. Jews who are not circumcised in the heart do not keep Torah. Gentile pagans without such circumcision of the heart keep a sense of their own self as their security, in place of Torah or Christ.

There is a kind of natural law of openness of heart that demands love of neighbour as one's self. The golden rule. Love of neighbour is the expression par excellence of the natural law. This takes both a negative and a positive form. Don't do to others what you wouldn't want done to us. Do to others what you would want done to you.

<u>'The redemption which is in Christ Jesus' (3,19-24).</u> This key term sums it all up.

Justification in Christ Jesus is an entirely gratuitous gift from the sheer mercy of God alone. This closes every mouth from self-boasting, so that all can recognise guilt and the need for grace. In the book of Job, Job claims his own justice as an inalienable right: the right of being vindicated at God's tribunal, the right not to meet a false scale or balance there. To this God replies: who are you? What's this justice of yours you are talking about? It is 'folly'. Job confesses that he spoke 'lightly'. His hand is now on his mouth. His eyes have seen God. He withdraws his words. He re-thinks himself (which is the literal meaning of re-pent = repenser in French).

The position of the psalmist is different. He asks god to respond to him in God's justice, and not enter into judgment with him. For no living being is justified on its own terms before god. Once a human being is given the justice of God, then works are also asked for, but they are works in which God is more active than we are: works of the mercy of God!

The Law has no role as saviour or redeemer. If you keep it, all you get is the justice that belongs to man, not salvation. You have to welcome salvation as a pure gift, by the sheer favour of his grace, in faith in Jesus. In this way there is no rupture between old and new testament.

<u>The gift is given as a 'redemption'.</u> 'In virtue of the redemption in Jesus Christ'. *Redemption in scripture almost exclusively refers to liberation from Egypt*. From slavery there. God delivers the people only <u>to attach them to himself and so 'acquire' them.</u> God liberates the people 'pour soi' – that is the true meaning of lytrousthai. The exile and return were seen as a new exodus like this. So too a future full redemption, along the same lines. Ultimately, as Jesus put it, it means entering into the fullness of god.

We can thus re-interpret the great day of the pardon of God (Rm 3,25). Yom Kippur is the great day of the pardon of God (3,25). It is the feast of pardons. Moses was told to build a kapporeth, all of solid gold, a throne, with cherubim, and the space between them. Jerome called it the oraculum of God (like that of Apollos at Delphi or Zeus at Olympus). The targum said Moses heard there the voice of the Spirit (the Lord is Spirit). There was a series of pavements leading to the kapporeth. For Gentiles, women, Israel, priests, and then a veil. Even the high priest could not go through the veil – under penalty of dying – because the Lord was present above the kapporeth. Only on Yom Kippur the myth said that Yahweh could cover the kapporeth with a cloud, so that only then the

high priest could go in there. And sprinkle it with the blood of bull and oxen – seven times. He did this for the sins of Israel, and for his own sins as a priest (the sin of the priest was held to render all Israel culpable.) Note that the temple of Herod did not have an ark or a kapporeth….

Christ is the place par excellence of the presence of Yahweh. He is the oraculum, where God spoke filially to men. When he died on the cross, he did so in love, and love is the contrary of death. It is then the victory of love and life over sin and death. Through that act of love of Jesus, God acquired us in love. We were so reconciled to a God who never ceased to love us (as Augustine said). This 'repaired' the disorder of sin and re-established all of us in divine friendship. God did not need to change: we did. God exposed Jesus as the new kapporeth, or destined him to be new kapporeth, - velum templi scissum est. Each year of the Jewish history, and liturgy, God pardoned in patience and left the people unpunished, in a provisory kind of way. Now in Christ he gave the definitive pardon. De profundis: copiosa apud eum redemptio. With god he is the hilasmos, the abundance of redemption.

11. A THEOLOGY OF REDEMPTION: JOHN

JOHN'S ACCOUNT OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY: THE BOOK OF GLORY

In the fourth gospel, Caiaphas is made the spokesperson for an interpretation of the mysterious reasons for the passion of Jesus, which builds on the insight of Ratzinger. In Jn 11, we read :

> 'One of them, Caiaphas, the high priest of that year, said: "you don't seem to have grasped the situation at all, you fail to see that it is better for one man to die for the people, than that the whole nation be destroyed". He did not speak in his own person, it was as high priest that he made this prophecy that Jesus was in fact to die for the nation, and not for nation only, but to gather together into unity the scattered children of God.'

It is this togethering-including-enlarging-reconciling that is the real mystery, not only of the passion, but of the whole life and person of Jesus. John's passion narrative uses it as its chief motif. Its key, in Jewish terms, is the enlargement of covenant, to a point of total unboundariedness. This would appear (in hindsight at least) to have been the original intent of the covenant with Israel, although, necessarily, it was then expressed in a more particular and more historicised form. This appears to have been the underlying issue between Jesus and the Jewish 'responsibles'. In the framework of the fourth gospel, it is the climax of the message of Jesus, in the final period of his maturity, in Jerusalem. It is impossible for anyone to arrive at such a position, and to speak such a message, without an interior living, personally, of the implications of this mysterious enlargement. Jesus in his full adult maturity as a person must have lived like this, and it must have done something to his interior being as a person.

This chapter will pursue some characteristics of this enlarged interiority of Jesus. As a preliminary, it may be useful to note that there seems to be a dynamic in the spiritual life, as such, that moves towards such a point. In the early stages of the spiritual journey, people often try to live a 'spirituality'. As they develop, they seem to be drawn to give away their 'spirituality' and become 'healing' people for others. And yet, the more they enter into the freedom of being healing persons for others, the more they experience the impossibility of living life simply in that way. They are drawn into a different grandeur, into the enlargement of an interiority that they would never have guessed existed. It is non-exclusive : it includes them and everyone else at the same time, without defences or boundaries, with a freedom and a daring not known before. There are traces of this set of dynamics in the gospel narratives of Jesus, especially in the fourth gospel.

The work of this chapter is to explore the fourth gospel for leads of this kind. It is necessary to preface it with a look at the sort of person Jesus is in that gospel. [49]

More than one commentator on John's gospel has noted this almost ungraspable trait of the person of Jesus. Kasemann surely has it in mind when he attempts his own brief sketch of the Johannine Jesus :

> 'who walks on water and through closed doors, who cannot be captured by his enemies, who at the well of Samaria is tired and desires a drink, yet has no need of drink and has food different from that which his

[49] The material used here from John's gospel is not taken as literally historical. None the less, the impression of the person of Jesus given in that gospel is taken to be real, and not a literary construct of the author.

> disciples seek.... He cannot be deceived by men, because he knows their innermost thoughts, even before they speak. He debates with them from the vantage point of the infinite difference between heaven and earth. He has no need of the witness of Moses, nor of that of the Baptist. He dissociates himself from the Jews, as if they were not his own people, and he meets his mother as one who is her Lord. He permits Lazarus to lie in the grave for four days, in order that the miracle of the resurrection might be more impressive. And in the end the Johannine Christ goes to his death of his own accord. Almost superfluously, the Evangelist notes that Jesus at all times lies in the bosom of the Father, and that to him who is one with the Father, the angels descend, and from him they ascend again. He who has eyes to see and ears to hear, can see and hear his glory. Not merely from the Prologue and from the mouth of Thomas, but from the whole gospel he perceives the confession, "My Lord and my God".' (Kasemann : 19)

This 'Johannine Christ', as Kasemann calls him, is the 'mature Jesus' being contemplated in this chapter. His glory is his daring enlargement of vision and action. Several questions of method must now be mentioned.

First, we are dealing with the interface of the divine and the human when we use the theme of 'unboundariedness'. Divinity is by definition infinite, unboundaried. The Jesus of the fourth gospel is its true reflection, symbol, icon, and sacrament. It translates (or 'exegetes') the divine unboundariedness into a human unboundariedness. Jesus, as a person, is the meeting point of the two.

Secondly, it would be highly desirable to find exact philosophical language for these qualities of 'unboundariedness'. Philosophy, however, even personalist philosophy, does not seem to have reached a level of sophistication that makes such language available. If that is true now, it is much more true in the first century, at the time of Jesus and the new testament writers. In such a lacuna in language, it is necessary to have recourse to a special kind of poetry in order to say something that must be said about Jesus, but that cannot be said in the available language of proper scientific and philosophical thinking. There is a valid poetry which comes from the instinct of the human heart, and philosophy, at any time, merely serves it without substituting for it. All that philosophy does, is refine, purify, and translate it into more demanding frameworks of meaning than those within which the poetry originated. The poetry is neither fanciful nor mythic : it is the only possible way we often have, of saying that we know that there is more than we can see or say. It is not reducible to a subjective construct. It is the genuflection of critical minds to an objectivity that transcends our capacity for critical expression.

The fourth gospel is a 'poem' of this kind. Many biblical experts often assert that the sayings of Jesus in that gospel do not carry the stamp of historicity. It does not matter in the long run. They carry the stamp of poetry in the service of mystery. They amount to a lyricism about the divine personhood of Jesus at a point at which the formal traditions have lost any power of articulation. Our Christology would lack something vital if we left it out. It is not a question of making a defence of this or that logion, or of accepting the chronology or geography that John uses as framework for his portrait of Jesus. It is simply a question of receiving the full picture. The 'evidence' of this poetry is not subject to the canons of criticism, although it does not contradict their assure results. Those who refuse it, seem to do so, not for professionally critical reasons, but from a bias, sometimes recognised, against disciplines that transcend criticism, and against an appreciation of the function and realism of poetry in integral human experience. For too long in the catholic theological tradition, a prevailing scholasticism has been guilty in this regard. It would be unusual, and out of character, if the divine person of the Word did not leave traces of his own unboundariedness in the humanity of Jesus. It would also be unusual if these traces could be grasped in formal language, without recourse to poetry. The fourth gospel is written on these assumptions.

In that gospel's vision, Jesus is a prophet like Moses, but much more than a prophet. He is wisdom in person, sent, and come into this world. He is with-towards (pros) God, equal with (para) the Father. His humanness, with its fidelity and tenderness, is a living exegesis of the Logos. He is the Only-Son. At the Jordan, he is consecrated not by a prophetic spirit that seizes him, but by the Holy Spirit that hovers gently over him. His immersion into an ultimacy that is gentle, is conveyed by the symbol of water. It is available to all, without exclusion, even to a Nicodemus, who cannot grasp how he can be born again of water and of Spirit. The Samaritan woman learns from Jesus what real worship is, in Spirit and in Truth, that is, beyond the particularities of time, place, and ethnic boundaries. He is like an apprentice seer, who observes what the Father is doing and does it himself. Storms do not disturb him : in the storm centre, he IS. He is the bread, the fruit of a new tree of life, in a garden world in which the curse has been taken away. He can go to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles, and claim to be, in person, the source of both the water and the light. He does not come, or act, 'of himself' : he is from the Sender, and he is going back soon. He knows his whence and his whither. He is from above, and not alone : his work is not to judge the present but to manifest the Beyond. He knows the Father, keeps his Word, does only what pleases him, and declares the truth he learns from him. It is not his own glorification that he seeks, but the Glory, ever more radiant, of the Father. He

wants his own to be at home in all of this, to be assured of their place there, and to be free in its truth. He wants them to take in what he says, to let it penetrate them, to understand it, to be grounded in its truth. Then they will live from it, as he does, and not from resources they call their own. The eyes of a man born blind are anointed as a seer of these things. Jesus is the shepherd, even the gate of the sheepfold. Those he calls hear his voice and know he is no stranger. He makes them safe, and gives them life to the full. This is true even of sheep who are not presently of this fold. In his priestly prayer he asks the Father to keep them, to render them into a state of consecration, in Truth; that is, to protect them from everything that does not come from the Father, to fill them with the radiant visibility of the Father's presence, and to let them live in the mystery where there is no darkness or cover-up, where the passage of time cannot dim the light. (Boismard: 1988)

Three principles can be drawn from this description. First, Jesus lives entirely from the resources of the Father : this relation of utter reliance upon the Father is a function in him of the mystery of the Spirit, which has dwelt in him and draws him to the Father, just as it dwells in the Father and inclines the Father to pour out the riches of his own Selfhood into the Son. If it is acceptable to speak of someone who has nothing of himself, as a 'peasant', Jesus is profoundly 'peasant' here. Secondly, Jesus expresses, manifests, makes known and shares with others this mystery of absolute relationship with and dependency upon the Father. Everything he does is its evidence and unfolding. It seems natural to think of him as, in human terms, a peasant person, for this to be humanly credible. Thirdly, Jesus makes use of every human situation and context into which life takes him, as a milieu for the continuation of this 'work' that comes from the Spirit, and is from and towards the Father. To sum up, there is only one Truth in the life of Jesus, and there is only one Spirit that conveys, expresses, and expands that Truth among us. The maturity of Jesus is the living enlargement of that Truth, in and through the Spirit.

Is this picture of the grandeur and openedness of Jesus compatible with the known rawness of death on a cross ? Can death, and indeed death on a cross, be a context for the unfolding of Jesus' relationship with the Father through the Spirit ? It is not a question of taking anything away from the reality of crucifixion. It is not a question of taking anything away from the maturity of the person of Jesus. It is rather a need to see how death on the cross brought to a consummate point everything we have tried to show in the person of Jesus in this maturity.

Before we address the question directly, there are several issues worth raising about the mature person of Jesus. Was he always in the state in which we have just portrayed him, or did he develop humanly to this point ? It would be possible to think affirmatively of both possibilities, but the latter of the two is the more human and appealing. Incarnation is a divine choice to be fully human, and to enter into the naturalness of human evolution. It is possible, speculatively, and without claim to historicity, to sketch a kind of model of the life of Jesus as it would have matured.

The earliest stage of Jesus' adult life locates him with John the Baptist. When his mentor is taken and executed by Herod Antipas, he enters a second stage, in which his own distinctive ministry begins. (Perhaps he was disillusioned about the kind of future John had preached, in an ascetical and apocalyptic way). In this second stage, in Galilee, he is principally a healer, moving among the people as and where they lived, on their own terms. The springtime of this Galileean phase does not last very long, and is brought to a close by the misinterpretation of many who want to make him their political leader, and so provoke the surveillance of Herod. He is then virtually forced to go to Jerusalem, and enter a third stage of his adult life, the one presented here as his 'maturity'. Here the motifs of all-inclusiveness, unboundariedness, dependence on the Father alone, and inSpirited manifestation of the divine mystery of ultimate relationship, are the main thing. This too is destined to come to a close, through his rejection by the leaders and his betrayal by a disciple. In this model, there are three positive moments in his life, interspersed by three moments of some negativity. The dynamic that moves Jesus through them all (which could be called Spirit) is preparing him for the seventh phase, the encounter with the cross.

In somewhat Jungian language, the first stage (with the Baptist) is governed by the archetype of Senex. We are in the presence of the Wise Older Man, of religious and ascetical transcendence. Elijah is a good symbol for it. Around this complex, there lurks the Shadow, the ambiguity of success in this kind of ministry that breeds opposition and ultimate failure. In the second stage (in which Jesus heals in Galilee), we find the archetype of Puer. Jesus here finds his own distinctive and 'new' field of expression : he is the child, the originator, the creator of something new in the systems of the past. Perhaps he was seen by some as something of a Shaman. Once again, there is a tragic flaw here : the villages of Galilee are not big enough for what he can and wants to do. Nor are the people there big enough to know what it really means : their failure to comprehend brings it to an end. In the third stage, (in which Jesus is in Jerusalem), we find the archetype of Vir, the Man. The Man is enlarged, is now the true Self, the (good) Shepherd of all being, the all-including one. And it is here, precisely, that there is the ultimate wounding, the wounding of betrayal. You could say that the whole life of Jesus has included a process of repeated and constant 'stigmatisation',

in which every concrete form he sees as congruent to his divine purpose is broken open, and he is left more and more an opened-out person, truly unboundaried. He has lost his life to save it.

Such a developmental understanding of the progress of Jesus' life is a help in approaching the mystery of the passion, as seen in the fourth gospel. At each step of his life, an 'emptiness' has become a step into a new and larger openness. He has never been in control of these dynamics : they have been in control of him. His attitude has been one of growing disponibility to them, and of increasing transformation through them. At every stage, there has been a concurrence of the mystery with the fragility : both are real, undiluted, together. The 'path' of Jesus could be seen as one of progressive de-apocalypticisation (stage one), de-domestication and de-romanticisation (stage two), de-mystification and de-individualisation (stage three), in which, finally, the one who was always at the disposal of the Father is at the disposal of his opponents, defencelessly, in order to reveal even to them that the final mystery is not Jesus, but the Father. Perhaps it is only a man like this who could, through the cross, gather together into one the scattered beneficiaries of the eternal and unboundaried covenant.

In discussing the Johannine passion narrative, we shall look at four things. First, we shall indicate in an elementary way two different interpretations of the paschal mystery; secondly, we shall discern from the outlines and motifs of the fourth gospel what seems to be the central poetic symbol of the paschal mystery, according to John; thirdly, and principally, we shall translate this symbol into a set of theological principles which affect our understanding of the person of Jesus; and fourthly, we shall return to the 'Caiaphas principle' to suggest how unboundariedness is meant to emerge in the peoples of the covenant, through what has happened to the person of Jesus in Passover.

First, then, interpretations of the paschal mystery. Since the nineteen fifties, it has become central, once again, to the pastoral and spiritual life of the church, chiefly through the liturgy of holy week and Easter. It has been thus understood as the mystery concerning the way Jesus 'passed through' suffering, (Holy Thursday night), and death (Good Friday), and burial (Holy Saturday), into resurrection (Easter Vigil and the Easter season).

This 'received' sense of passover is that of passing-through the ultimate negativities of human existence into a new positivity of life. It is like the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt into the promised Land. The climax is Jesus' arrival into glory, at Easter. The mystery of the Holy Spirit is not primarily emphasised in this interpretation : it will get its turn at Pentecost.

In the original Hebrew roots of the word, 'passover', the verb 'peshaq' does not mean 'passing through'. It means, more literally, 'hopping over', and refers to the manner in which the angel who brought the final plague upon Egypt (the slaying of the first born), 'hopped over' the doorposts sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and spared the Hebrews this visitation. As a result, the people so spared were able to leave Egypt, pass through the Red Sea, and finally enter the promised Land. It is then easy to see how the 'passing through' connotation became attached to the verb 'peshaq', but that is not its primordial sense. Is it possible to develop an interpretation of the paschal mystery of Jesus more in the sense of 'hopping over' than of 'passing through' ? This would mean a change of governing imagery in the vision of the mysteries at the end of Jesus' life. It is no longer the image of a journey, but the image of a presence of transcendence, which makes many of our images of our humanness relatively irrelevant. It literally 'hops over' them. Our actual liturgical practice, and the conditioning derived from them, has made such visions difficult for us.

The fourth evangelist has gone further. He has freely, and poetically, developed his own interpretative image of passover. It is in the direction of transcendence, but it is not content with the original 'hopping over' model. It is the idea of 'passing across' the Spirit from Jesus to his own. To see this, we need to examine John's passion narrative.

The constant tradition of the church, from the earliest times, has made liturgical use of the Gospel of John in the celebration of holy week and Easter. From it we use the gospel of the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, the reading of the entire passion narrative on Good Friday, and selections from the appearance narratives during the Easter season. Jesus is not seen primarily as journeying through suffering and death into resurrection. He is rather seen as so dwelt-in by a divine presence that his humanity is not accentuated (it could be said to be 'hopped over'). The divine glory enters into Jesus, and becomes manifest, and given to us, through his fragility. The divine glory is the Spirit, and in John's passion narrative the Spirit that dwells in Jesus is passed across, and poured out, by and from him to and upon his own. This suggests that the meaning of Jesus, and the meaning of being a person, is to become the pure channel of this Spirit for others through one's exposed fragility.

John's passion narrative has often been called the 'royal passion'. The way to the cross is not a journey of agony and tragedy. It is more like a royal procession, conducted and led by Jesus as Lord and King, to a mystical enthronement and coronation on the cross. There, as Lord and King, he imparts his Spirit to his own. This is a supremely royal gift. [50]

John announces the key motif of this passion account as 'love'. In 13,1, he introduces the entire narrative by showing us Jesus, who knew that the 'hour' had come for him to pass from this world to the Father, and who had truly loved those who were his own in the world, about to do something new. In and through the passion, he is going to demonstrate how ultimate love can be, that is, he is going to be creative in bringing the expressiveness of love to a new kind of consummation.

What John presents as the fullness of this agape, is the seventh in a series of 'semeia', or signs, which form a pattern throughout the entire gospel. They are arranged, seemingly by the author, in a chiastic pattern :

A) water becomes wine at Cana;
B) the raising of the royal official's son;
C) the Sabbath healing at Bethesda;
D) the Bread of Life discourses;
C*) the Sabbath healing of the blind man;
B*) the raising of Lazarus;
A*) 'wine' becomes 'flowing water' from the crucified.

This is a world of deeply compenetrative, poetic symbols.

In the actual passion narrative proper, the simplest outline of the material is temporal : Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter. There is no Holy Saturday in John's theology.

The Holy Thursday account is principally about the last Supper (but without notice of the institution of the Eucharist). It tells of the washing of the feet, of the intimacy of the meal, and of the promise of the Spirit to come.

There is a linking section, between Thursday and Friday, in which there are three interrogations involving Jesus, first with the arresting party, secondly with Annas, and lastly with Pilate. Jesus' encounter with the arresting party is all majesty. He interrogates them : 'Whom seek ye ?'. When they name 'Jesus of Nazareth', he proclaims, 'I am He', and they fall prostrate to the ground before him. (In Gethsemane in the fourth gospel, Jesus is not prostrate on the ground : the only ones to be found there are the soldiers.) The interrogation of Jesus by Annas is framed by the reports of Peter's denials : his 'I am not' stands in deliberate contrast to the 'I am He' of Jesus. Perhaps Peter's interest was principally in self-preservation, in warming himself. Annas' interrogation is about Jesus' teaching on discipleship in synagogue (the bread of life discourses ?) and temple (the sayings at the feast of Tabernacles ?). Jesus does not elaborate but insists that he has spoken openly to the cosmos, not cryptically, but manifestly. The blow given him by the high priest's servant is the reaction of a limited system threatened by the unboundariedness of Jesus. Jesus' encounter with Pilate is studiously arranged in a sevenfold chiasm,of moments 'inside' and 'outside' the praetorium. In the morning light (of revelation ?) Jesus moves easily across the boundary that Torah has set up between Jew and Gentile. He is witness to a Truth (a-lethe-ia) larger than Israel or Empire. He conveys the sense that where he comes from is not contained in either of their categories. All they, through Pilate, can do, is state that their laws do not apply to him, and regress to the ritual mockery of what they sense is beyond them. There is the ironic coronation (thorns, robe, etc), and the revelatory proclamation ('behold') of true humanness ('the man') as helpless fragility. In conclusion, Pilate, wilting under pressure, has Jesus sit (this is a congruent sense of the Greek verb) on the seat of judgment, and declares him to be the royal judge of Jew and Gentile together, gathered for eschatological judgment in valley of Joshaphat. Perhaps there is more than a hint that the effective criterion of judgment is the conception of humanity as the frail and exposed vehicle of human ridicule

[50] Many of the insights used in the following interpretations of the Johannine passion, are due to the work of I.de la Potterie (1989).

and divine compassion at the same time. The fragile, the poor, the mocked, the defenceless, the silent recipients of violence without retaliation, are the bearers of a humanity in which there is a Truth not recognised by the powerful. The eschatological judgment has already been passed on these grounds, and has occurred in the praetorium of Pilate.

We are already speaking of Good Friday. The chief interest of John on this day is the scene of the dying of Jesus on Calvary. There are five elements in it. First, the title affixed to the cross (INRI); secondly, the seamless robe; thirdly, the prophecy to his mother and to the beloved disciple; fourthly, the thirst and actual dying; and fifthly, the flow of blood and water from the dead body of the crucified Jesus. The most intriguing presentation is that of the actual dying, but the structure used to frame it makes the message to the mother and disciple more central still. There are high symbolics here : it is not a record or 'actual description' of an empiric event.

The four Easter scenes presented in the fourth gospel are first, the two disciples at the tomb; secondly, Mary Magdalen at the tomb; thirdly, the appearance of Jesus to the group of the disciples; and fourthly, the appearance for the benefit of Thomas. All of these are linked to the preceding stanzas of the Johannine poem by a brief mention of a full and royal burial on Friday evening, and an allusion to Sabbath, with nothing recounted from that time of rest.

For our purposes, it is possible to select from all this material, and concentrate on the three 'fundamental' scenes : the supper, the dying, and the appearances. Each is deeply poetic. In each, the key motif is basically the same. At the supper, it is the mystery of the beloved disciple leaning upon Jesus, and being supported by him, and inSpirited by him. At the dying, it is the mystery of the group of disciples at the foot of the cross, being inSpirited by the dying Jesus. At the appearances, it is the faith and confession of these inSpirited disciples, and the inSpiriting of disciples who were not present at the death on Calvary. All three are different yet complementary ways of looking at the same central mystery. It is the mystery of the giving of the Holy Spirit to us from the crucified Jesus. The whole Johannine passion is a feast of what in other traditions might be called a 'pentecost'.

The symbolic key to the supper account is the figure of the beloved disciple. It is argued by scholars that this figure may have a historical basis.[51] Here, it is taken as a literary motif. This disciple is presented as a symbol of a form of discipleship based on 'being beloved'. It implies a one-to-one personal relationship with Jesus that has the privilege of singular intimacy. The beloved disciple has not been designated by name in the traditions of the fourth gospel. Perhaps he has been deliberately left in his own anonymity.

The setting of a formal Jewish meal or feast of table fellowship is used to convey the values of this form of discipleship. The key expression, in 13,23, is that 'the disciple whom Jesus loved was reclining, or leaning, upon or next to Jesus'. The physical leaning is not just an expression of intimacy, it a symbolisation of faith. The verb, aman, in Hebrew, means literally to lean on someone, and is the usual verb for 'to believe in', or 'to have faith in' someone. Faith is not an attempt to hold up on one's own. It means letting one's self be held up by someone else. In his leaning posture, the beloved disciple lets himself be held up by Jesus. There he can sense the inner meaning of relationship with him, put direct questions to him, receive experiential knowledge reserved for those who deeply believe, see Jesus as others cannot, and later be his witness to others. Jesus' new commandment to his own is to let others lean on them as he lets them lean on him. His assurance to them is that when they are fruitful and heavy with many burdens and works, like the branches of a laden vine, they can lean back on him, the true stem, and receive support. This leaning of the disciple on Jesus is an image of the leaning of Jesus on the Father. Any self-consistency that others might see in Jesus, is, in the last analysis, a derivative of his dependency on the ultimate Source of all consistency, the Father (who pours himself out). Through the leaning disciple, Jesus himself is revealed as a leaning person.

It is not enough to lean : one must also be held up or supported. Jesus is understood to invite, encourage, and persuade the disciple to lean on him, and when he does, to support and hold the disciple. The verb that sums up these functions, is the Greek verb, parakalein, from which the noun, paraclete, is derived. Jesus is then the primary paraclete for all the beloved disciples who would lean on him. Only when his visible presence is taken away from them, is the word 'paraclete' transferred to the Holy Spirit, whom he leaves in his place. John has five 'paraclete passages' interspersed through the last supper discourses, which refer to this transition, and to the 'paracleting' functions thus given to the Spirit, in the absence of Jesus.

[51] Cf. J.Charlesworth, The beloved disciple: whose witness validates the gospel of John ?, Valley Forge (Trinity Press International), 1996.

In effect, when Jesus paracletes the leaning disciple at the supper, the disciple is so close to him, and he to the disciple, that he is literally breathing on him. This is the central Gestalt of the Johannine poet. It suggests a real inSpiriting of the disciple by Jesus, for the Spirit is the breath. In Lukan language, this is the 'pentecost' of the beloved disciple. It is the real meaning of the Johannnine Holy Thursday : a symbolic feast of the giving of the Spirit.

John has developed this image in order to ready his readers for Good Friday and the dying of Jesus. It is notable that he never actually uses the word 'dying' for his presentation of this mystery. It is also notable that for him, Jesus dies in broad daylight and not in darkness. If there is mystery, it comes with an abundance of revelation. He gives three complementary suggestions, all of them full of poetry, to give access to the revelation.

First, the actual Greek words the poet uses to describe the death of Jesus are unusual (no other death is so described in any document, secular or religious, of ancient Greek writing). He says that Jesus,

'having bowed his head, passed across the Spirit (or, life-breath)'.

Some background is needed for an understanding of those words. The method in which crucifixion took place is not clearly known to us. It may well have included a great deal of variety, largely at the whim of the execution squad (who were well practised at it). But in the mind of the fourth evangelist, Jesus must have been fixed, hands and feet, to the cross, not tightly, but with a certain capacity for movement. It is possible that a crucified man could survive for a considerable period of time in this position. The actual length of time would depend, mostly, on the angle of elevation of the arms. He could survive by constantly moving his body. He would have to place the weight of his body on the feet, and press down, thus raising the body into an erect position. Then the rib-cage is elevated, the lungs are clear, and breathing can continue. The muscles cannot hold such a position very long, and the man 's body would slump downward. During his time on the cross, he would move up and down and up again, until finally the physical strength to do so would diminish. Then the lungs would fill with fluid and breathing would become impossible. Death would come in the shock of it all. John is not interested in the medical aspects of these details, but he does assume that the crucified Jesus is in a 'moving' position on the cross. [52]

Beside and underneath the cross, John sees a group of some few who had faith in Jesus. It is a group of Galileean women including his mother, and Mary of Magdala, and others : with them was the beloved disciple. This is high mystical poetry, presenting the mystery from God's point of view. In that sense, the group was very 'really' there. Whether or not they were historically present, or even proximate, would need to be argued on grounds different from those that this gospels assumes. In our developed poetic imagination,we could well see this group as leaning on the vertical upright of the cross, and looking up towards Jesus. We could equally envisage Jesus as looking down and bent over them.

This is the implication of John's intriguing expression, 'having bowed his head'. Jesus does not first die, and then his head drops. The inclination of the head comes first. It is more than the 'head', taken in a strict sense, that is bent over. Of his own free will, he who would not allow his life to be taken from him but would lay it down of himself, decided that all was consummated, and that any further physical effort to prolong mortal existence was not indicated. He then allowed his body to incline down and over the group beneath the cross, so that his face so to say came close to their upturned faces.

It is in this position that he died, or in the exact words of John, 'passed across the Spirit (life-breath)'. The Greek words are, 'paredoken to pneuma'. The Spirit, the life-principle that made Jesus who he really was as a person, was communicated across in the dying breath of Jesus to the group of faithful 'beloved disciples' at the foot of the cross. At no moment is that Spirit lost to flesh : it passes immediately from the crucified body of Jesus to the bodies of the believers who were with him to the end. From this moment, and through the efficacy of this act, the Spirit is their life-principle, as it was his. More than that : Jesus in the very moment of dying by crucifixion, is enthroned as Lord and is with the Father. Thus he can and does impart their Spirit to his own. Having loved in a human way those who were his own in the world, he has now demonstrated how consummate his love can be : the full meaning of agape, thus transformed, is the inSpiriting of one's own in and through the act of one's dying. Death too is transformed.

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[52] Cf. J.Zias, J.Charlesworth, Crucifixion : archeology, Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, in J.Charlesworth, ed., Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, New York (Doubleday), 1992.

This is the same symbolism the Johannine writer has used at the last supper. The disciple there was leaning, being supported, being inSpirited. At the cross, the group of disciples is leaning, is supported by his gaze, and is inSpirited and paracleted by his final breath over, upon, and into them, and by what that breath symbolises and 'contains', the holy Spirit by which he lived. It is their 'pentecost'. But it is the Spirit of the crucified, which enables them to live and die as he has done, not a spirit of extraordinary phenomena. In the Jewish Passover seder, when the story of Exodus has been completely told, the listening group is directed to bow its head. Passover is complete. Here it is more than just Passover : in one mystery we have, simultaneously, the dying, the exaltation, the being-with-the-Father, and the imparting of the Spirit. Irenaeus was not wrong in seeing here also the birth of the church as an inSpirited people.

Our poet is a good educator, and offers alternative symbols for the same insight. After the death of Jesus, the soldiers wished to ascertain if death had truly occurred. They broke the legs of those crucified with Jesus, but not those of Jesus. Realising that he was already dead, they pierced his side, and with it presumably the pericardium, with a lance. 'Immediately there flows blood and water'. From a physical point of view, we can easily imagine that the build-up of fluid in the lungs has been released, and with it, some congealed blood. But the point is not physical, but symbolic. In classic biblical symbolism, the flow of living water has always signified the imparting of the Spirit. At the feast of tabernacles in Jn 7, Jesus said that if anyone thirst, he should come to him, and that the believing person should drink from him. John then explained that Jesus said this of the Spirit. 'Out of his interior (koilias) will flow rivers of living water'. John also explained that as yet there was no Spirit (given), for as yet Jesus was not yet glorified. Now, in his death, he has entered into the glory of the cross, and the Spirit, as living water from his interior, flows over and upon his own. Rabbinic teaching said that unless water flowed, there could be no true purification, and unless blood flowed, there be no true and valid sacrifice. Water had flowed at the Jordan, at Jesus' baptism. Water had become flowing wine at Cana in Galilee, at the wedding feast, the first of the 'signs'. On the cross, he has taken 'wine' to drink, and it has become flowing water from his side. In Jerusalem, water flowed from the temple : now, in Jerusalem, a fountain of water is opened to the inhabitants of the City, and the Spirit of grace and pardon is poured out upon them.

In the mood of the poem, we are meant to imagine the group at the foot of the cross, still standing there, not having moved from their position of faithful presence. We are meant to 'see' the crucified body, now dead, still bent over them. The flow of water is then abundant over them; it showers upon them. It is their baptism in the Spirit. They are being immersed in the experience given to Jesus himself on the occasion of his own baptism. John, in the use of continuous present tenses in the verbs he chooses, suggests that this flow has never ceased : in a mystical sense, it is still flowing upon any beloved disciple who may still be standing there.

There is a third moment in the scene of the dying. After these things have taken place, the group, still unmoved, 'looks on the Pierced-Through-One'. It remains in contemplation of the Stigmatic who inSpirits it. His wounds are not symptoms of agony, reminders of pain, or even scars of victory. They are channels and sources of Spirit. Jesus' emptiness in crucifixion-death has become openness, and the Spirit he can no longer contain flows uninhibitedly from him to them. For him now, to give the Spirit is to spill the Spirit. In a gush of vitality, it makes them born anew from above them. Precisely at the moment in which he is a vessel that cannot hold anything, he is the channel of the Spirit for them. There is indeed a new birth, for him as well as for them. The Spirit is creating a new kind of person, one that is utterly open and so is a pure channel of the Spirit to others. The sketches of St.John of the Cross and the painting of Dali, do more than simply suggest it.

The final major 'day' for John is Easter. He gives us four scenes to ponder, and they are interlocked.

First, two disciples (who initially have no expectation of individual resurrection, without general resurrection, which is patently not occurring), go to the tomb at the behest of Mary of Magdala, and discover that the stone has been utterly removed from the tomb : it is gone. Within the tomb, the pieces of clothing are folded separately, exactly as the rubrics direct for the vestments of the high priest at the conclusion of the temple liturgy of Yom Kippur. Peter can make nothing of this. The beloved disciple, who was at the foot of the cross and was at that moment and henceforth inSpirited, goes into the tomb, as it were without fear, and 'he saw, and he believed'. He is the first person, in John's narrative, to believe in his heart that Jesus lives. This is as it should be : it is impossible to make such an act of faith except in the Spirit. There is however a delicate touch in the Greek : an ingressive aorist is used, 'he was beginning to believe'. The fullness of understood faith would come only later.

Secondly, Mary is still standing by the tomb, as she stood by the cross on Friday. (Is there an impression, mystically, that she - in contravention of Jewish law - has not left ?) She enters into dialogue with a mysterious person who is more than a gardener. The first Adam had originally been a gardener. And Mary is the first, in John's narrative, to confess with her lips that Jesus is Lord : 'Rabbuni'. It is again as it should be. She was inSpirited in his dying. It is only in the Spirit that anyone can confess with their lips the eternal and undying Lordship of him who has transcended death and is already ascending to the Father.

Thirdly, he goes to the Father, in ascension, and returns, in an appearance, on Easter day itself. In the evening he appears to the group of central disciples that was not present on Calvary. They were not inSpirited there. He speaks (present tense) to them, and says, 'Peace be with you'. It is not simply an ordinary form of greeting, but the greeting that accompanied the paraklesis of the last supper, 'My peace I give to you...' He shows them his hands and his side (not, his hands and his feet - we are not dealing here with apologetic proof). This is the gesture of paraklesis once again, the continuing invitation to lean on the body of Jesus as the source of support and life. They are filled with joy. They are then sent, as Jesus was sent from the Father. Jesus puts words on the mystery that is already happening : 'Receive ye the holy Spirit'. They now believe in the mystery that his new life through death is the source of their own lives and mission. It is their 'pentecost'.

Fourthly, Thomas was not with the group when this took place, but is present a week later at the (next ?) appearance. He refuses to believe, that is, to lean, unless he can put his finger in the marks of the nails in the hands, and put his hand in the opened side. But he cannot do that, physically, without actually leaning on Jesus. John plays with the irony of the situation. When Thomas, parakleted by Jesus, leans on him, he is inSpirited, and breathed on, in his own 'pentecost'. He then makes his profession of faith, 'My Lord and my God'. No longer faithless, but leaning.

The evangelist concludes with the comment that those are not really disadvantaged who were not alive during the time of the initial appearances of the living Jesus. In continuity with them, there are other possible experiences of the living, parakleting, inSpiriting Christ. They are no less valid, at a later time, than the initial appearances. Perhaps there is a certain lack of tangibility, but there is no less effectiveness in the communication of the Spirit from him. One such set of appearances is our encounter with the poor with whom Jesus identified. They, for us, are the living Christ, rumours of resurrection. They are inSpiriting Christs for us. Another such encounter are the icons, or sacraments of his rising, such as, pre-eminently, the Easter Vigil and the Sunday Eucharist of the church community.

There is, then, a single central governing insight in the 'poem of the passion' which is the passion narrative of the fourth gospel. It runs throughout the supper, the dying, and the appearing. It is the imparting of the Spirit by Jesus once he has entered the ultimate state of his own emptiness and fragility, in crucifixion. Whatever the state of crucifixion wrote into the character of his personality, remains there forever in the power of his resurrection, and forever enables him to be the Spirit-conveyer to us through his poured-out-ness. Total poured-out-ness and total inSpiriting, are two sides of the same mystery.

It is necessary to translate this insight of John into a set of theological principles which can affect the understanding of the person of Jesus. Jesus channels the Spirit to us, when he becomes the 'place of the presence' of the Spirit for us. Perhaps it is better to say that he extends to us the place of the presence, where the Spirit is always naturally present, with the Father. Calvary has become the holy place, the holy of holies, where this extension of the original place of the Spirit occurs. In Johannine symbolism, when Mary of Magdala sees the empty tomb, two angels (cherubim ?) extend their wings over it, and 'it' becomes a place of emptiness where nothing inhibits the purity of utter presence. This is the new temple, not made with hands, formed in the triduum of the passion. The crucified, opened Jesus is the reality which the empty tomb signifies. In his own utter emptiness, the crucified Jesus is the place of pure unimpeded presence of the Spirit. For the Spirit can only be present in an utter purity where nothing can stand in the way of presence, where there is nothing but presence. That is the meaning of Spirit. This occurs, mysteriously and naturally, in the Godhead. On Calvary, Jesus who is always with God, becomes one with humanity at the point where humanity is utterly empty, that is, where there is nothing in humanity that can stand in the way of a pure and utter presence within it. The crucified state of Jesus thus extends the natural state of Jesus as God. The place where the Spirit has always been is extended to the crucified body of Jesus. That body is the link between the two places of complete uninhibitedness, and so is the channel of the Spirit from one to the other, from the Father to us. The place of the Spirit with the Father is in continuity with the place of the Spirit in us. Unimpededness at one level is continuous with unimpededness at the other.

Such is the paradox here that it could be said that the emptiness of Jesus is the glory of God. The emptiness of Jesus is the ambience of the given Spirit. There is a kind of analogy of the cross here : it is a mystery of faith, a scandal to Israel and foolishness to the Gentile mind. Its purity, simplicity, and utterness defy explanation.

A manifestation, or revelation, occurs, not of the existence or givenness of the Spirit, but of the person of the Father.
The Father is disclosed as the pure source of the Spirit, both in the Godhead and in our fragility. It is when the Father is so understood that he can communicate the Spirit to those who have learnt to 'know'. There is a love of God, and an understanding of the love that God bears to us, that is impossible outside the context of Calvary. Only in that love does the 'knowing' take place. If the Father is not thus revealed as pure source, we do not know the Father, and cannot thus receive from him as a known presence his given Spirit. Calvary is the sanctuary of the ultimate worship of the Father, in Spirit and in Truth, because Calvary alone has made known who the Father really is, and who the Spirit really is from, and to whom, and in whom, the Father gives the Spirit.

To whom ? To a pure receptivity, in whom there is nothing but receptivity, and nothing but a receptivity that will not make any attempt to possess or contain the Spirit of the Father, but will become the uninterrupted and unimpeded channel of the Spirit's flowing further into others who also are such a receptivity. If Jesus is to be called the Son of this Father, he is Son exactly in this sense : that is the revelation of the Cross. If he is Word of God, the Cross is his exegesis. If he is a divine person, he is an opened-out person.

The Son has a real role in the procession of the Spirit, in God, and to us. The Father and the Son are co-principles, in their own very different, and personal ways, of the procession of the Spirit. The Son is a living welcome (accueil) for the Spirit, necessary indeed for the Father's act of gifting-origination. There are two different ways here in which a divine person is 'at work' : the way of the Father, and the way of the Son. They are forever connected, but never the same. There cannot be a manifestation of one without the other, or of either without the Spirit (of them both). Calvary is the unveiling of this trinity of persons, and of us, as the place, through Jesus and the cross, of their presence in and to us.

It is precisely the purity of the situation that creates the revelation. Pure origination, pure receptivity, and pure flowing elan of love can only occur where there is nothing but purity, and for us that means utter emptiness of everything but who we really are. It is paradoxical to speak of purity when we speak of crucifixion. Outside the camp, the scapegoat is publicly considered to be anything but pure, is not kosher. But it is precisely where all possible kosher rules must cease, that there emerges a situation totally without complexity. There is literally nothing to complicate it. It is only an emptiness, which is an openness to the Pure, the Divine, and the Open. The one is manifest and given in the other.

It is necessary to insist on the ultimacy of the cross if our theological vision is to be coherent. We are not speaking of death in general, or in the abstract, even though that is ultimate enough. The real point is death on the cross, as the entire new testament tradition has appreciated, since the hymn of Philippians 2. We are not looking at crucifixion merely as a physical way of dying : the medical dimension of crucifixion is not the issue. We are looking at it in a symbolic sense. Symbolically, the opened hands and side of the crucified Jesus, and indeed, his whole crucified personality, which remains as such forever, is a revelation of a kind of openness never known prior to the reality of Jesus' being crucified. Symbolisation itself is transfigured by this unique symbol. And we are left with wonder about the kind of man who lived the Calvary mystery and now inSpirits us : what sort of person, then, had he always been ?

One of the challenges here is to our received notions of personhood. The personhood of the Father here is not one of isolated grandeur, but one of pure originative outpouring. The personhood of the Son is not one of self-subsistent autonomy, but one of pure welcoming receptivity. The personhood of the Spirit is the elan between this pure actuation and this pure receptivity. It is an elan that we can rightly call 'love', as long as we do not posit our finite way of loving as the primary model of what love means. The person of Jesus is - through Calvary - the pure, empty and open welcome of the utterly outpoured gift of the Father's Spirit. As such, the person of Jesus is then the ultimate paradigm of all human personhood.

We are dealing with a passover, but not with one like the Jewish exodus, ethnic, particular, and with much of the journey still to come. Here we are asked to negotiate a transition from one assumed style of being a person to another : a transition from adequacy to self-diffusion; a transcendence beyond all boundaries, a trans-ethnic, universal 'presence'.

Traditional theology has always had difficulty in adapting the notion of person in order to make it applicable to Jesus. The difficulty may well come through the use of a notion of person that has not been through the Calvary purification. It is from the real, crucified Jesus that we need to learn a different notion of person, and then use it to understand persons in God, person in Christ, and person in ourselves.

I have suggested that Jesus could well be called a peasant, not only sociologically, but spiritually. There is no greater peasantness than crucifiedness. I have repeated the church's traditional faith that Jesus is truly a divine person, incarnate. There is no greater divineness, in personality, than the pure welcoming and imparting receptivity of the Crucified. We speak, again with the faith of the church, of the 'virginal conception' of Jesus in reference to his entry into this world : the phrase may well be used, perhaps with more value still, of his entry through the cross into his final state of Spirit-giving. Here is the healer who lives a protopathy beyond all barriers. Here is the one who shares, not just his table, but his Spirit. The narrative of Jesus' life does not end with his death : it rather begins there, and is the story of his giving of the Spirit to us. He has done more since his death than he ever did before it.

Let us return to the 'Caiaphas principle', which, in the mind of the evangelist, is the key to the meaning of the passion narrative. Through the Spirit-giving death of Jesus, the scattered children of the covenant are to be gathered into one. John explains what he means by this, in his presentation of the scene on Calvary just before Jesus dies. It is the exchange between Jesus and two of the figures at the foot of the cross, the beloved disciple and his mother. They are 'standing by' him. He addresses each of them formally, in turn, with a revelatory formula ('behold'). He discloses to each the real identity of the other in their mutual relationship. He tells both that they belong together. John comments : 'and because of the Hour, the disciple received (or welcomed) her into his intimacy'. It is not a case of one being looked after or cared for by the other in a temporal sense. It is change in the quality of their relationship. This change is to be initiated by the beloved disciple : he is to receive her. [53]

There is much symbolism here. We are not dealing directly with individual and real persons, but with the groups which they symbolically represent. The 'Woman' or 'Mother' is symbolically understood to be Israel, the Daughter of Sion, the Bearer of the entire covenant people. The 'beloved disciple' stands for the young, new christian communities (known to the evangelist), that is, the local churches of the early decades of the christian movement. The focus of interest in the exchange from the cross is not male and female, but christian and Jew, or, in reality, gentile and Jew, under the symbols of male/young and female/old. It is the young christian movement, because of the Hour of the inSpiriting, that is to receive and welcome ancient Israel into its intimacy. It is a matter of recognition, acceptance and mutual belonging, and it is up to the christian side to initiate it.

The Greek of Caiaphas' prophetic statement reads, 'to gather together into one' (hina synagogei eis hen). It is a question of
'synagoging' both Israel and Christianity into one 'congregation' so that there will be one flock and one shepherd, as befits one covenant. They are to be synagogued into 'one' : it is hard to tell from the Greek whether this is to be read as 'into unity' in the abstract, or 'into one person', concretely. This is the spring-time beginning of something larger than both claimants to covenant, and it is made possible by the communication of the Spirit of the Crucified,in the dying moment of Jesus, to both, together.

After Jesus dies, Israel and the Church, if we may so designate the woman and the disciple, remain at the foot of the cross, in contemplation, together. They are not looking at each other, they are looking together at the person of the Crucified. He is the Pierced-Through-One, the permanent stigmatic who is the source of the Spirit for both, together. Through his given Spirit, from above, they are being (re-) conceived and (re-) born together. There is thus a soteriological and an ecumenical sense in John's presentation of the dying of Jesus : he is pierced and crucified for the integration of Israel and the churches, and perhaps more broadly, for that of all people who in any way share in the universal and cosmic covenant. Gerhoh of Reichersberg said that this was the 'consummation of Israel and the

[53] I.de la Potterie has summarised the history of exegesis of this passage, in The Hour of Jesus, pp.133 ff. He notes that the patristic tradition did not really understand the profundity of the passage; it was only in the twelfth century that a larger perspective emerged; the first and chief representative of it was Rupert of Deutz; after the Renaissance there was a return to the moralising viewpoint of the fathers; in modern times, under the influence especially of Gaechter and Braun, there has been an increasing return to the more spiritual exegesis of the middle ages.

new inception of holy church'.[54] When this would take place, Israel, the Woman, would know her final joy in the awareness that at last anthropos (person ?) was born into the world, in and as a result of the Hour (of the Cross and the Spirit). The eternally unboundaried stigmatic breaks down the boundaries of the human. It is interesting to note that immediately after this scene, John has Jesus say that all is 'consummated'. John also links this scene with two events that have gone immediately before it, the leaving of the seamless robe intact, and the affixing of the title to the cross. The seamless robe could be symbolically understood as that of the Jewish high priest. The title of royal messiahship (King of the Jews) was written in the language of the Jews, and in the languages of the Gentiles (Greek and Latin). The dying-inSpiriting Jesus is King (of all), Priest (for all), and Prophet (to all), for the integration of all.

There is then a personhood that transcends all the historical and cultural schisms of the covenant, and of human existence. We will not come to know it, without knowing the person of Jesus as the cosmic Christ who holds and binds all these things together. And this person is a Jew, from Nazareth, in Galilee.

[54] Cited in de la Potterie, p.144-245.