

THE STIGMATINE SEAL



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The Heavenly constellation of these **stars** is in the form of a **Cross**,
our only Hope for a share in the ever-lasting glory of the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit.

“The bright **red** is the challenge of the Precious Blood, the Price of
our Redemption, of faith, martyrdom, perseverance...”

“The **silver** band is also the sign of maturity...”

“The **white lilies** indicate our Heavenly Patrons, Mary and Joseph -
who were committed to the development of the corporal life of
Jesus...”

“Simple **wheat and grapes** have the awesome ability to symbolize
for believers the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar...”

Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS

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THE STIGMATINE SEAL

Introduction

[1] The effort of this study will be to take the Stigmatine Seal as a reminder of the biblical reflections supporting the Stigmatine charism for our prayerful consideration. The Greek word for “seal” is **sphragis**, a term familiar with students of the Sacraments of Initiation: as through them, we are “sealed” for the most Blessed Trinity. Hence, **sphragistics** is the study of seals and signets. Our effort here will be to ponder the message of our Founder, as depicted in this Seal.

[a] The Latin word is **signum** - in Greece and Rome signet rings were used to attest to the authenticity of a document. These rings were later superseded by the first stamps and stamp-pads. We think of the ‘seal’ impressed in some way, on our hearts we are ‘signed’ by the charism of Fr. Bertoni.

[b] In legal documents, the seal came to symbolize legitimacy and even the personality of a transaction, the individuals involved. Thus, in the Scripture we read: ‘Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples’ [cf. Is 8:16]. The Book of the Apocalypse is famous as “the Book of the Seven Seals” that only the Sacred Stigmata on the Immolated Lamb could open:

“... The phrase ‘heart of Christ’ can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known His heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted... [cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in Ps 21:11*; cf. *Ps 22:15*].” [CCC 112].

[c] Numerous idioms refer symbolically to the use of seals: ‘under the seal of silence, confession’ - “signed, sealed and delivered” - “to put one’s stamp, seal on something” ¹.

[2] In our analogy, the comparison is being made between the “seal” and an “ICON”: as Jesus is the ICON of the Invisible God [cf. Col 1:15] - the KARAKTER [sometimes translated as the “radiance”, the ‘radiant Light’ of God’s glory, the perfect copy of the Divine Nature [cf. Heb1:1, ff.] - the Stigmatine Seal may present the possibility of reflecting biblically on the charism of St. Gaspar Bertoni. The Stigmatine

¹cf. Hans Biedermann, “Seal”, in: *Dictionary of Symbolism*. Facts on File. An Infobase Holdings Company, p. 302.

Seal may be compared, like ICONS, to a flower garden planted upside down - the roots are in heaven with the Most Blessed Trinity, and the fruits, or the flowers on earth, in the hearts and minds of human beings reached through the Apostolic Mission of the Stigmatine.

[a] An ICON is a Window on the Mystery ². In times such as ours, at the beginning of this New Millennium, images play a central role in so many of the sectors of life. The hope is that the Stigmatine Seal might influence a bit more our thoughts and condition our personal and apostolic choices. Sacred Images can help to discover even deeper spiritual values for one's own daily life of self-giving.

[b] Some might limit sacred images merely to the simple description of the facts of our faith, or the spirit of the Stigmatine community, without reflecting in some greater depth the revealed mysteries of the faith - or the Seal that describes in some reality the charism of a canonized Saint and Founder of the Stigmatines, Gaspar Bertoni.

[c] The art of the ICONS immerses one into the Eastern world of spirituality that can be both familiar and somewhat foreign: these images are 'familiar' because the faith between East and West is fundamentally one ³. However, these images are also somewhat 'foreign' because they are typically of the Eastern spirituality. The ICONS, however, can speak to believers of old - and still may have a message for today. In like manner, the Stigmatine Seal might be prayed and developed as we ponder, pray the riches of the charism re-presented, depicted by it.

[3] By familiar means - such as form, color and light - the ICONS and the Seal, concretize the religious reality being projected. These images have as their scope to communicate an ideal that stands beyond them - leading to a more committed present, spiritual and apostolic life - as well as to the after-life. These images communicate something of a reflection on the mystery of Jesus Christ, the constellation of saints around Him, and commitment to heroism, and the heavenly-life beyond the stars. Reading the seal from the bottom up, we are moved to the 'red' of total self-giving, in imitation of the Martyrs; through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; in the harmony of life together, through the stars and beyond the heavens.

[4] To communicate the sublime content, and a realistic hope in striving to attain the Christian ideal, the human mind is much attracted by images, art. The art

²cf. Egon SENDLER, *Icona: Finestra sul mistero*. Roma: Centro Russia Ecumenica.

³cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Oriente Lumen*. May 2, 1995.

“empties itself” by leading the viewer, the contemplator beyond what is the form and colors, to the ideal offered. Art is not just a painting on a flat board - but, much more it is a symbol and a ‘place’ of a special Presence, mystery.

[a] Art is a kind of intellectual spiritualization, a glorification of matter, much due to the biblical influence, and the charism of a heroic, ‘ordinary’ saint. Even the ultimate glory is presented as a “beatific vision”. All uplifting earthly images but reflect meekly this ultimate, brilliant vision of all Beauty.

[b] The ICONS are closely united to the sacramental life - the sacraments spring from the material world, invaded by the Blessed Trinity through the ministry of the Church, in union with Jesus Christ. This elevates the created elements through to some participation in the very being of Christ Himself: “**as** the Father has sent Me, **now I send you...**” [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.]. In the hands of the artist, the saint, the image is transformed into a reality, something like the sacraments that ‘transfigure’ the human soul.

[c] This is all the result of an interior process: with the sacraments, they are ‘separated instruments’ of the divinity, and act from the very fact that the matter is presented to be poured out, applied for our consumption and use, for an increase of grace in one’s life. With the images, the process is more the work of the contemplator - a challenge presented to each one’s faith, hope, love - memory and imagination.

[5] The colors are an exercise in “polychrome” - much more highly sophisticated in the creating of ICONS, but also most active in the work of imagery. This play on colors has its way of making its impression not only on the eyes, but also on the mind and heart. It is said that ‘each ICON is a festival’ - and each image something of a commemoration, a point of remembrance, a challenge for commitment.

In the Scriptures, we are invited to look out on the **rainbow**, and to praise its Maker! Across the sky it forms a glorious arc, drawn by the hands of the Most High. [cf. Si 43: 11, ff.].

The brightness of the colors lead one to reflect on the **stars**: - and the eternal life beyond: “... The glory of the stars makes the beauty of the sky, a brilliant decoration to the heights of the Lord. At the words of the Holy One they stand as he decrees, and never grow slack at their watch...” [cf. Si 43:9, ff.]. The Heavenly constellation of these stars is in the form of a **Cross**, our only Hope for a share in the ever-lasting glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



The Stigmatine Seal

- These **stars** are also a reminder of the heavens which bespeak, chant the glory of God [Ps 19] - like the apostles, for whose feasts this Psalm is so often used, '... their voice goes out through all the earth, and their message to the ends of the earth...!' [cf. v. 4]. This is the ideal of the Apostolic Missionary, ***quocumque euntes in diocesi et mundo.... per quodcumque Dei Verbum ministerium....*** These are the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, "by whose wounds ours are healed...!" [cf. Is 53:5; 1 P. 2: 21, ff.] - I bear the marks of the Lord! [cf. Ga 2:20], no longer I who lives, but Christ lives within me. These are presented to us in the form of a **Cross**, our only hope! Luke speaks of the **Wounds** in the hands and the feet [cf. Lk 24:39] - John also mentions the Wound in the side, as it is mentioned twice that he had reclined there next to Jesus [cf. Jn 13:23, f.; 21:20]. The old Latin saying might indeed apply here: ***per aspra ad astra!***

- The bright **blue** is the color of the sky and the life beyond - the color of the sea, crossed by the Apostolic Missionaries to the far reaches of the globe - for about 185 years of our history as a Congregation. Blue is 'celestial' in several senses of the word: the appearance of 'the wide blue yonder' has long been an inspiration to pilots, cosmonauts, and also an invitation: if Christ has risen, let your thoughts be above! - this is the footstool of the supra-temporal, supra-regional, supra-cosmic God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the ICON of the OT meeting with the three Angels [cf. Gn 18:1, ff.], the Russian artist Rublev has used blue as the color in common with these three heavenly visitors - the OT Trinity is depicted in blue is the common color of their Trinitarian divinity.

- The bright **red** is the challenge of the Precious Blood, the Price of our Redemption, of faith, martyrdom, perseverance - a reminder of the presence of the Holy Spirit, in an ever renewed Pentecost for the New Millennium. This is the color of **total self-giving**, even to the shedding of one's own blood. OT Redemption was achieved through the divine intervention, allowing the chosen people to cross through the waters on dry land - this Sea of Reeds would be represented in Jesus' trial, as they placed a reed in His hand cf. Mk 15:36] - or again, on the Cross, when they offered Him a sponge on a reed [cf. Jn 19:29]. Like John the Baptist, we are not meant to be 'reeds swayed by the wind' [cf. Lk 7:24] - but, with Mary, Spouse of Joseph, to stand by the Cross of Christ [cf. Jn 19:25]. This is the appeal of perseverance.

- The **silver** band is also the sign of maturity - and a sad reminder that Jesus was betrayed for a mere 30 pieces. It is the sign of humble value, and with gold is purified in the fires of trial and tribulation - as St. Gaspar Bertoni, presented in the words of Pope Paul VI, as one who suffered 'atrociously' in his service of God. While suffering can be Punishment for sin - it is also Pedagogical [the "School of God"]; it is mysteriously Redemptive; Eschatological, indicating that we do not have here a lasting home; as well as being Purifying, and Uniting one to Jesus Christ ⁴.

- The **white lilies** indicate our Heavenly Patrons, Mary and Joseph - who were committed to the development of the corporal life of Jesus - these are the Models of service, total commitment, self-giving to Christ. For the Stigmatine, these heavenly intercessors are an inspiration for our qualified, competent ***obsequium episcoporum***. White is the liturgical color for the Resurrection, the Eucharist, Pastors, Doctors and Doctoresses of the Church, as well as for Holy Men and Women - rich symbols all, challenges for each! Canon Law 687 ¶ 1 states: "... Religious life, as a consecration of the **whole** person, manifests in the Church the **marvelous marriage** established by God as a sign of the world to come. Religious thus consummate a **full gift of themselves**, as a **sacrifice** offered to God so that their **whole** existence becomes a **continuous worship of God in charity**..."

[6] Can the simple but attractive Stigmatine Seal 'say' all this? How can so much be represented in an image? Is it possible through a few colors, even though well organized on a board, to present all this for our reflection? The real answer might lie within human nature - made up of the corporal, the spiritual - the bodily and the mental, with almost endless capacity to translate. The mind informed by faith,

⁴Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, Feb. 11, 1984.

and the will inspired by hope and charity, all moved by grace, can help us in all reflection:

- the **Trinity** itself is often presented through images: by the inanimate **triangle**, or by the lowly **three-leaf clover**. However, today the best image of the Trinity we have is **Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Thursday: the Paschal Mystery** - Jesus, the ICON of the Invisible God, tells us: whoever sees Me, sees the Father, Son and Holy Spirit! [cf. Jn 12:45; 14:9]. The Cross is a window into the Trinity, and a mirror for Christianity.

- the **Cross** remains the central Christian symbol, even now, following the Resurrection. With just two lines inter-secting, vertical and horizontal - we have the mystery of the Power and Wisdom that the Cross is. There is the old Christian saying: *per Crucem ad lucem!* In the seal, the stars are placed in the form of the Cross.

- simple **wheat and grapes** have the awesome ability to symbolize for believers the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar - this Bread from heaven, that delights the recipient, and transforms itself into whatever each eater needed [cf. Ws 16:20, ff.]

If these symbols 'work' in "Catholic", universal faith, then it might be possible for the simple Stigmatine Seal to reflect certain clear aspects of the Charism of St. Gaspar Bertoni.

[7] With its roots in the mystery of the charism, this Gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, its humble nature can be transformed by the inner challenge of the charism lived so well by the saintly Founder and early followers. For the Stigmatine Seal to 'work', it needs to be translated more and more into the lives of those who know it, and according to their level of belonging - whether as professed and consecrated members - or lay associates.

[8] The soul of the **Apostolic Mission**, received through the Son in service of the Father is always the Holy Spirit - inspiring ever new choices, new courage and new hope, a new evangelization in this **New Millennium**. The Stigmatine Seal would not, then, simply be an "artist's conception" unknown to most of us now [most likely, to ALL of us!] - it is rather the interpretation of a theological content transmitted to us through the Stigmatine tradition.

[9] Like the ICON, the Stigmatine Seal has been prepared through contemplative service, purified and illumined in the lives of those who have tried to live it, and is thus able to be raised up to a spiritual realm. In this New Millennium, for this new

beginning, we need to allow the Holy Spirit of God a fuller sway in our lives - that indeed we might indeed be His instruments in the Mission of the Divine Son at the service of the Father, entrusted then to the Apostles.

[10] The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, asked at the beginning of his long Pontificate, that we might indeed **“Open our Hearts to the Redeemer!”** The appeal to all of us in on-going renewal, life-long conversion, is to open our hearts to the Stigmatine charism, allowing it to permeate the more our minds and hearts, for an ever more qualified commitment to the spiritual and apostolic life.

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TO PRAY OVER THE STIGMATINE SEAL

Introduction:

[1] It seems rather evident that Fr. Bertoni was quite sensitive to art - one special painting inspired in Him the Apostolic Mission:

“... At St. Joseph’s Convent. At the base of one’s nothingness, God may be found. While experiencing some sublime insights regarding God, I also had a much deeper understanding of myself.

This evening I saw **a painting of the Most Blessed Trinity**. This inspired much reverence and love for the Three Persons. The Eternal Father was depicted with **His arms open, which explained His Mercy to me, and the ready communication of His gifts**.

Thereafter, the Office was said with much devotion and for the glory of God...” [cf. MP: August 24, 1808].

[2] His charism was likewise supremely **‘Christological’** - he saw the spiritual life as the following of Jesus Christ, manifested in terms of the artist:

“... We need to make within us **a portrait of Jesus Christ...**” [cf. MP: Feb. 26, 1809].

[3] In his Constitutions, he is also much moved by the human genius of artistry, a reflection of special divine gifts:

“... [Our students] shall likewise study metaphysical philosophy, physics and mathematics, and acquire some knowledge of natural science, medicine, literature of

the liberal and mechanical arts, of agriculture, drawing, architecture, calligraphy, orthography, etc.... " [CF # 54].

[4] **The Holy Spirit** is considered the great Artist of the Stigmatine community:

"... Moreover, there is nothing which causes us to love another more than to perceive his special endowment of **virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit**, and to contemplate him as the image of God **painted with the most beautiful colors of grace**. If, therefore, all strive within themselves to grow in these virtues and gifts and to consider them often in others, and if they regard others as superior to them in soul, rejoice over their spiritual gifts, and give thanks to God, mutual charity shall flourish among them in a wondrous manner..." [CF # 223].

[This is the Constitution that His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, quoted to the General Chapter in Private Audience, in February of the Jubilee Year, 2000 - the Founder took this Constitution *verbatim*, from Francis Suarez, SJ and his ***De Religione Societatis Iesu***].

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[5] The Second Vatican Council treated sacred art at some length in its Constitution on the Liturgy:

122: Very rightly the fine arts are considered to rank among the noblest expressions of human genius. This judgment applies especially to religious art and to its highest achievement, which is sacred art. By their very nature both of the latter are related to God's boundless beauty, for this is the reality which these human efforts are trying to express in some way. To the extent that these works aim exclusively at turning men's thoughts to God persuasively and devoutly, they are dedicated to God and to the cause of His greater honor and glory.

"Holy Mother Church has therefore always been the friend of the fine arts and has continuously sought their noble ministry, with the special aim that all things set apart for use in divine worship should be truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, sings and symbols of heavenly realities. For this purpose, too, she has trained artists. In fact, the Church has, with good reason, always reserved to herself the right to pass judgment upon the arts, deciding which of the works of artists are in accordance with faith, piety, and cherished traditional laws, and thereby suited to sacred purposes.

"The Church has been particularly careful to see that sacred furnishings should worthily and beautifully serve the dignity of worship, and has welcomed those

changes in materials, style, or ornamentation which the progress of the technical arts has brought with the passage of time.

Therefore, it has pleased the Fathers to issue the following decrees on these matters:

123: The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own: she has admitted fashions from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites. Thus, in the course of the centuries, she has brought into being a treasury of art which must be very carefully preserved. The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites with the due honor and reverence. It will thereby be enabled to contribute its own voice to that wonderful chorus of praise in honor of the Catholic faith sung by great men in times gone by.

124: Ordinaries, by the encouragement and favor they show to art which is truly sacred, should strive after noble beauty rather than mere extravagance. This principle is to apply also in the matter of sacred vestments and ornaments.

Let bishops carefully exclude from the house of God and from other sacred places those works of artists which are repugnant to faith, morals and Christian piety, and which offend true religious sense either by their distortion of forms or by lack of artistic worth, by mediocrity or by pretense.

When churches are to be built, let great care be taken that they be suitable for the celebration of liturgical services and for the active participation of the faithful.

125: The practice of placing sacred images in churches so that they may be venerated by the faithful is to be firmly maintained. Nevertheless, their number should be moderate and their relative location should reflect right order. Otherwise they may create confusion among the Christian people and promote a faulty sense of devotion...

..# 129: During their philosophical and theological studies, clerics are to be taught about the history and development of sacred art and about the sound principles underlying the production of its works. As a result, they will be able to appreciate and preserve the Church's venerable monuments, and be in a position to aid, by good advice, artists who are engaged in producing works of art..."

[6] The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** also has a notable section on sacred art:

2500: The practice of goodness is accompanied by the spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual

beauty. **Truth is beautiful in itself**. Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is **beyond words**: the **depths** of the human heart, the **exaltations** of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals Himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his Wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos - which both the child and the scientist discover - from the greatness and beauty of created things comes corresponding perception of their creation for the author of beauty created them [cf. Ws 13:3, 5].

Wisdom is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore, nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness [cf. Ws 7:25-26]. For wisdom is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail [cf. Ws 7:29-30]. I became enamored of her beauty [cf. Ws 8:2].

2501: Created in the image of God [cf. Gn 1:26], man also expresses **the truth of his relationship with God the Creator by the beauty of his artistic works**. Indeed, *art* is a distinctively human form of expression; beyond the search for the necessities of life which is common to all living creatures, **art is a freely given superabundance of the human being's inner riches**, arising from talent given by the Creator and from man's own effort, **art is a form of practical wisdom, uniting knowledge and skill** [cf. Ws 7:16-17] to give form to the truth of reality in a language accessible to sight or hearing. To the extent that it is inspired by truth and love of beings, **art bears a certain likeness to God's activity in what He has created**. Like any other human activity, art is not an absolute end in itself, but is ordered to and ennobled by the ultimate end of man.

2502: Sacred art is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation; evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God - the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who 'reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature', in whom; the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' [cf. Heb 1:3; Col 2:9]. The spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels and the saints. Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier.

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ART & PRAYER

[cf. Jesus Castellano Cervera, ocd, “Pregare con le Icone”. Roma: Centro Russia Ecumenica, 17, pp.]

Introduction

[1] The Eastern Spirituality has its contribution to make in this age of Ecumenism, and quest for union among people. The “**Jesus Payer**”, deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture, is one of these contributions of the East:

“... As Jesus went on his way, two blind men followed him shouting: ‘Take pity on us, Son of David!’” [cf. **Mt** 9:27, f.]

“... Then out came a Canaanite woman from the district and started shouting: ‘Sir, Son of David, take pity on me...!’” [cf. **Mt** 15:22,f.].

“... As they left Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Now there were two blind men sitting by the side of the road. When they heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by, they shouted: ‘Lord! Have pity on us, Son of David...!’” [cf. **Mt** 20:30, ff.].

“... They reached Jericho; and as he left Jericho with his disciples, and a large crowd, Bartimaeus [i.e., the son of Timaeus], a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and to say: ‘Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!’ And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder: ‘Son of David, have pity on me...!’” [cf. **Mk** 10:46, ff.].

“... Now as he drew near to Jericho there was a blind man sitting at the side of the road begging. When he heard the crowd going past he asked what it was all about, and they told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by. So, he called out: ‘Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!’ The people in front scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he shouted all the louder: ‘Son of David, have pity on me...!’” [cf. **Lk** 18:35, ff.].

[2] Along-side this emphasis of a particular biblical prayer, the East has also offered the world **a unique faith in sacred art** - used in Liturgy and personal prayer, perhaps to a far greater extent than anything known in the West.

[a] Due also in part perhaps, to the facility of reproducing colors on a massive scale, the Icons have appeared every where in our own time: they are found in Churches, little sanctuaries and chapels for prayer, in private homes: the West has

begun to imitate the tradition of the “**Corner of Beauty**”, or the “**Prayer Corner**” of the East.

[b] These have not been assimilated as much in the West - by and large these depicted mysteries are used more for decoration - but, also as a sacred reminder. They offer a mysterious presence, a kind of memorial, and are an invitation to **recollection and to prayer**. These beautiful, colorful images are an invitation to prayerful reflection and collection. They lead the believer back to the Mystery of our Salvation, the purpose of life.

[c] These sacred images have served the East for centuries as **an invitation to contemplation** - they are called “**Contemplation in Color**”. They offer a mystery of sacred presence - and there is a certain “sacramentality” to the sacred icons for the believers of the east. They do respond to the mysteries of Revelation - perhaps our Stigmatine seal might serve us in a similar manner, to call to mind the inspiration of St. Gaspar Bertoni.

[d] Sacred images offer us a reminder of the love of God for His Church - and the response of one man and his community to that love, by dedication to the very same Apostolic Mission that the father entrusted to His Divine Son. The typical Christian prayer is a reflection on the inspired Word of God and the mysteries. We might think of the Stigmatine Seal as a reflection on the Mission that Jesus received personally from His Father, and which He handed on at the moment of the manifestation of His Glorious Stigmata on Easter night: “As the Father has sent me, now I am sending you...” [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.]

A Theology of Prayer with Sacred Images

Presentation

At the basis of praying with the assistance of images and symbols there is a profound theology based on the Word of God, the Tradition of the Church, and a charism of a religious community. Symbols and colors open up the way, and serve as a form of encounter with God in prayerful reflection - remembering, imagining, re-dedicating oneself.

1. A Certain “Sacramentality”

a. Taking a cue from the sacred icons already in use for long centuries in the churches of the East, they have come to mean a certain ‘sacramental’ **presence** of persons and mysteries which they represent. In a certain way, the images can “circumscribe”, or depict a much deeper reality. The ultimate point of reference is the ideal lived by Fr. Bertoni over 150 years ago - and which he also understood as part of his Apostolic Mission his long years serving the Church as an invalid. The essential reference in his life was Jesus Christ - in His sorrows and Glory. He is the ultimate “prototype” that leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Reflecting on an image has as its purpose to incarnate its ideal in our lives.

b. Every charism in the Church needs to be subjected to its Magisterium. The Seal that we have before us represents the charism lived in summary form - serving as a spring-board of sorts for our own deeper reflections and on-going formation. The essential function of an image is simply a furtherance of the doctrine of “signs” - that is, to bring before the eyes, and the mind and heart, that which the word of God does to the ear of the believer. From reflection, comes the Incarnation of the symbol in our lives, through the imitation of Christ, in following the charism of Fr. Bertoni. ***The ultimate devotion is imitation.***

c. The exemplarity of the **Suffering and Risen Christ, Spouse of the Church and the soul**, offers its own divine energy to assist in imitation. In this sense, the “Exemplar” is a “Cause” assisting us by being more than a sign, indicating a way to follow - but, offers us an efficacious assistance to follow His “**arduous and difficult**” vocation [cf. CF # 185]. In some way, it is necessary to represent Jesus Christ - this is done by Divine Revelation, the Incarnation, the Eucharist. Any representation must in a certain sense, be conform to His Person and His Mission. The Image of Jesus Christ imprinted in us by Baptism, is permanent, but not dormant - it is indelible, but also dynamic.

d. The role of the Holy Spirit in all this is to inspire the Word of God and to inculcate charisms among the People of God for the upbuilding of the Holiness of the Church. The Holy Spirit is that Interior Law and Painter, the Builder of Holiness. He reveals Jesus Christ to us as **the ICON of the Invisible God**. He is the one Who brings to completion our efforts to imitate, to follow Christ, and to put on His mind. All sacred imagery hopes to be a kind of play on colors and images, shadows and illumination, darkness and light, that reflect a more sublime reality. By the transparency of an image, there is a kind of manifestation of a mystery.

e. There is a certain 'sacramentality' to signs, symbols and images. As Icons can be certain "presences" of the persons and mysteries they represent, by a certain analogy we might apply this also to our own image. In the case of Icons, this is "translated" by their use in the Sacred Liturgy, by the very sacredness of the place where the sublime Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated. For the Stigmatine Seal it accompanies so much of our tradition - it is found on letter heads, on our walls - and hopefully, in our hearts.

f. One of the hopes of our reflection together is that through our praying over our own charism we may enter more into dialogue with God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - with our Holy Patrons, with our canonized Founder - and hopefully with one another. The Stigmatine Seal is an invitation to dialogue, to an encounter. It is a reminder of a presence to enter more deeply into communion with the Trinity, the saints - and a re-dedication always to our Apostolic Mission, a point of contact with Jesus Christ, Who received this Mission in the first place from His heavenly Father. We think of the Cross as a **window** into the Trinity and a **mirror** for Christianity - may we see our own seal as a reflection of a wonderful ideal in the service of the Church.

g. There is extraordinary value in our ordinary prayer and reflection together. Prayer needs to be rooted in the Word of God expressed to our senses in some way: it comes to our taste in the Eucharist, to our ears in sacred reading and communication of the divine word - it comes to our eyes in the communication of colors and symbols, this **rainbow** reflecting the majesty and goodness of God. The Stigmatine seal is a particularly bright work, yet it speaks to us of the **sorrow** of the Cross which was paradoxically for the **Glory** of God. As the many notes in a symphony may be blended into a harmonious whole, so, too, a well designed image has a way of drawing our hearts and inspiring them to make a return to the Lord for all the goodness that He has shown to us.

h. Images can indeed favor a personal encounter with God - as well as a community sharing of a saintly ideal. In the silence of our hearts we ponder the life of a holy man, St. Gaspar Bertoni - gone to God almost 150 years ago. In every retreat, in each time of reflection, there is always the invitation to make some sort of a response. Whoever sees Christ, sees the Father, He has told us [cf. Jn 14:9] - in the spirit of authentic witness, whoever would see, read, listen to the ideal of Fr. Bertoni would be led through the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension - back to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

i. Any image that leads to Jesus Christ permits us to enter into a dialogue of real friendship, fraternity with Him. The glance of the Divine Son is something of a

revelation of His Person and of His love for us - he **looked** on the rich young man, and loved Him [cf. Mt 19:16, ff.; Mk 10:17, ff.; Lk 18:18, ff.]. He **looked** on Peter when he called him - and He **looked** across the room to him when the Prince of the Apostle failed Him. Our prayer leads to on-going conversion, re-commitment and great hope in the Lord: prayer is the language of hope.

2. Prayer in the School of the Church:

a. Very early on in the Church, there is a wide-spread use of images and paintings and symbols. These were all mediations of a certain divine presence. The Church has always favored the use of images, which esteems these mediations, but only to transcend them and interiorize them. The Church does this with the Word of God contemplated [cf. DV 8; cf. also ***Christian Meditation***, October 15, 1989, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation; cf. John Paul II, Letter to Artists, April 4, 1999, Easter Sunday]. This is the spirit behind the regulated gestures of the body during the public Liturgies, and this is the role of the images.

b. Our Stigmatic image re-presents, in some way, the charism with which our Founder was blessed - there is discernible here in the colors and symbols a kind of spirituality based on the **Stigmata** of Jesus Christ, our **Holy Patrons**, fidelity and total commitment to the **Apostolic Mission**. The role of the sacred image is that it corresponds in some way to the very fact of God Who stands before us at all times, present to us, inviting us to dialogue, reflection, life-long formation, conversion. This is the Mystery of His face, His Person, His Message - in His sharing of Himself, He communicates to us of ourselves, of our own vocation. Sometimes just a bit of quiet is needed, a loving contemplation of the ideals re-presented in the Seal.

c. The Seal invites us to reflect on the Founder's ideal - and our response to it. The seal is an attempt at synthesis - a reflection on a charism inspired to a holy man by the Holy Spirit of God - at least, this was Fr. Bertoni's own personal conviction. The reflection on the Stigmatic Seal can be our own Stigmatic effort in seeking the Lord, in discerning His will for us at this juncture of our history - in these early months of this New Millennium. In three years time, Fr. Bertoni will be deceased 150 years - it is 25 years since his Beatification, and 11 years since his Canonization. Each of these event can be motives for our reflection, our conversion.

d. The Stigmatic Seal can offer its own pedagogy for our own prayerful reflection. It can bring to mind the essentials of our Stigmatic charism As in all prayer, there is an element of "**seek the Lord**", and to discern His will- not so much

for what we are to do with our lives, but more in the line of how to serve the Lord more fully. The use of any image also leads to the reflection on the Word of God - in the use of imagery, this Word is not only heard in the depths of our memories and hearts, but in some way 'seen' with our eyes: **Go forth and make disciples of all nations!** This is the challenge of the Apostolic Mission. Our heavenly Patrons, the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph, offer their witness, their intercession, teaching us through the Sacred Stigmata to the glories of heaven.

e. In some way, the Image of Jesus Christ is within us - a seal, or character, or form, a figure - all are terms used that might describe the character infused into us at Baptism. The image can serve as a reminder and as an inspiration - this is an invitation to share more deeply by contemplating the Gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed on Fr. Bertoni - and lived so admirably by many good men. Prayer is orientated toward life and toward Mission. The correct contemplation favors commitment. Reflection on the image of Jesus Christ leads us to a better appreciation of the persons of our neighbors.

f. As we strive to look on the Pierced One [cf. Jn 19:37; Rv 1:7], we never are far from His salvific gaze. The Lord watches over us with infinite tenderness and mercy. In order that this Stigmatic Seal - impressed in our memories and on our minds and hearts - can lead us to that ***contemplata tradere***, which Fr. Bertoni considered to be **the end of the Congregation**: "... In this clerical Congregation, which aims not only to contemplate on divine things, but also to teach contemplated truths to others, the members should possess not an ordinary but a perfect knowledge of all those things which pertain to faith and morals; therefore, it is necessary that the religious clerics of this Institute eagerly strive to acquire such a knowledge perfectly..." [cf. **CF 49**].

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PART ONE The Stars

Presentation

[1] There are many beautiful biblical passages involving the stars: - they have always been admired among the most splendid wonders of Creation

“... Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them indicate festival, days, years. Let them be lights in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth. And so it was. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day - and the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars. God set them in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth, to govern the day and the night and to divide light from darkness God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came the fourth day...” [cf. Gn 1:15-19]

“... Does not God live at the height of heaven, and see the zenith of the stars? ‘cf. Jn 22:12].

“... Praise Him, sun and moon, praise him shining stars... [cf. Ps 148: 3, f.]

“... Wisdom is indeed more splendid than the sun, she outshines all the constellations; compared with light, she takes first place - light must yield to night, but over Wisdom evil can never triumph...” [cf. Ws 7:29, f.].

[2] There is a natural symbolism inherent in the stars ⁵ noted through the centuries: fixed stars light the heavens at night and are considered symbols of cosmic order because of the regularity of their movement around the pole star. To “see stars” means to be temporarily dazed - to be “star-struck” can mean to have fallen suddenly, deeply under another’s influence. The ceilings of ancient Egyptian burial chambers were adorned with depictions of a starry firmament. The great number of stars in the sky was used to symbolize the countless descendants of Abraham, like the sands of the sea. The **Star of David** was made up of two triangles, called David’s Shield, or Solomon’s Seal.

[3] In Christian iconography, the presence of the stars indicated heavenly occurrences. The Blessed Virgin Mary is presented [cf. Rv 12] as standing on the moon with the stars as her raiment. Christ Himself is the “**Morning Star**” [cf. Rv 22:16], later applied to Mary in the Litany of Loreto. The **Wise Men** from the East, the MAGI, were guided by **the Star of Bethlehem** to the manger where the Christ child lay - this was the subject of one of Fr. Berton’s Epiphany sermons noted below.

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⁵cf. Hans Biederman, *Dictionary of Symbolism*, “Stars”, pp. 321, ff.

1211: A. Fr. Bertoni's 35th Sermon ⁶
For the Feast of the Epiphany, on January 6th, of the year 1806,
in St. Paul's, Verona.

In the past, my brothers and sisters, you have suffered intrusions of mine: today, you will still have to undergo another, but one that is not just for your best interests, but one that is necessary. The circumstances of the times in which we live demand this.

1212: The Feast that recurs today offers us both the material and the occasion. The Magi tend toward Christ, they seek Christ in Jerusalem, the seat of Herod, a powerful politician. But, Christ is born outside Jerusalem. The star that surely guides them to Christ, only appears outside of Jerusalem, far from the royal court.

What does this mean, my brothers and sisters, if not that we, too, tend toward Christ, that is, toward the truth, the life: “...*I am ... the truth and the life...* [Jn 14:6] But, this truth, this life that is the ultimate end of our desires, is beyond - that is, above every human intellect: ...*the eye hath not seen, O God, besides You what things You have prepared for them that wait for You...* [Is 64:4].

1213: It is only fitting, then, to go beyond all the opinions, above all the judgments of earthly wisdom, if we wish to find this blessed goal -indeed, if even we wish to find the star that is, an infallible rule that conducts to this blessed goal. This star, in fact, is Christ Himself, Who, as the Truth and the Life, He is also the Way in order to reach both the eternal Truth and the Blessed Life toward which we aspire: “...*I am the way, the truth and the life...*” [Jn 14:6].

In another place, this Evangelist says [ib. 1:9], that Christ is the True Light that illumines every person who comes into this world. He is uncreated Wisdom, the Word of God - and therefore, He has the words of eternal life: “... *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...*” [Jn 6:69].

1214: However, this word of the Word is hard for human reason: ...*This saying is hard, and who can hear it?...* [Jn 6:61]. This is because it cannot be understood, comprehended. It is necessary to go beyond dallying in human reasonings in order to believe it. The Star appears only outside of Jerusalem, and far from the courts of the worldly, earthly politics. And so it is clear that it is not human reason, nor the opinions of human beings, it is not the maxims of this present world, and it is not the dogmas

⁶cf. MssB ## 1211-1240

of modern wisdom - but, it is the Word of God that is the unique and infallible rule of our thinking, of our acting, in order to arrive at that supernatural end to which we have been called.

1215: No faculty can in its own operations surpass the limits of its own nature. If reason, however, is a directing faculty in human beings, it will be able to direct each one to a natural happiness. This is, provided, of course, that it be cleansed of errors and ignorance, not burdened by vices, not weighed down by passions. And it will never be able, on its own, to serve as the guide to the Christian for a supernatural happiness, to which it is destined by vocation,

1216: In fact, each human being, says St. Thomas [I, q. 1, a. 1], each human being is ordered toward God as to an End that surpasses the comprehension of reason. However, this End has to be foreknown by human beings if they are to direct their intentions toward Him and their operations. God alone, however, can instruct a person concerning these truths that surpass and exceed all human reason. Yet, these truths are so necessary that in them, all salvation resides for human beings. Salvation consists in God and in Christ: *...now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent...* [Jn 17:3].

1217: Whenever it is a matter of the soul, of the salvation of the soul - Tertullian wrote in this regard [*De Anima*, 1, near the end, p. 163/2], a human being must turn to God, and be directed according to the rules of God: When anything regarding the soul is to be examined, let each be directed in accord with the rules of God. One could not find a better Teacher of Salvation than the very Author of Salvation: surely no one more powerful demonstrator will you ever find than the Author. Who could teach, or reveal that which God has held hidden and concealed? The most wise in the world, the most prudent, are precisely those from whom God has held His truth so hidden: *...I confess to You, o Father ... because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and You have revealed them to the little ones...* [Mt 11:25].

1218: This is the way it is, my brothers and sisters. The little ones, the poor in spirit, the humble, who only know what God teaches them, Whose Spirit reposes on them. By the voice of God we are taught the knowledge of the truth. This is the view of St. Clement of Alexandria [*Stromata*, 7, 15, p. 757 C]. He teaches that if human beings say something without proving it, faith cannot be given to them, for human beings can also tell falsehoods. And if there is need of a proof, we do not await the testimony of human beings as witness, but through the Word of God we prove that which is sought. Since the Word of God is more worthy of faith than any demonstration whatsoever - rather, in this matter, it is the sole demonstration.

1219: Now God has spoken: *...God has spoken once...* [Ps 61:12]. He has also spoken in many ways: in the Prophets, to the Patriarchs, and ultimately in His Son, He has spoken to the Apostles [Heb 1:1, ff.]. And to these last, He has spoken even more plainly and more fully, the Holy Spirit instructing them regarding every truth pertaining to salvation: *...I have many things yet to say to you, but you cannot bear them now...* [Jn 16:12]. *...But when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will teach you all truth...* [v.13].

1220: We have the Books of the Prophets; we have the Evangelical Books of the Apostles: this is the Word of God revealed in the Scriptures. Furthermore, the Apostles communicated by voice many of these truths revealed to them, and left them to their disciples in the Deposit for the Church. These are contained in the common consensus of the Holy Fathers, in the authentic definitions of the Sacred General Councils and the Supreme Pontiffs, in the universal sense and custom of the entire Church. This is the Word of God revealed in Tradition.

1221: God has spoken: what more are we looking for? God has taught truth, salvation from His own mouth: why do we look for other teachers? Why would we ever make ourselves disciples of other human beings, if we have God Himself for our teacher? Why should we be bothered about the doctrines of earth, if we have the teachings of heaven? We have the eternal truth that directs us, and would we allow ourselves to be swayed by the fallacious opinions of other human beings?

1222: We have the Scriptures in which God speaks: what do the books of this world have to do with us? In the Sacred Scriptures we have all that is necessary, and not only this - but, further, all that is useful to know, to discern what is evil, to correct our habits, and to justify our spirit. What more should we need? In order to make us saints and instructed in every good work: *...All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct to justice...* [2 Tm 3:16] *...that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work...* [v.17]. This is what the Apostle teaches.

1223: The Word of God in the Scriptures, my brothers and sisters, ought to be the Rule of our thinking, of our acting, if we wish to know the truth, and to arrive at salvation. The foreign systems of thought, which always vary, as they are dispersed through the books of our century, cannot do this. Do not let yourselves be carried away, my brothers and sisters, by various and novel doctrines, as the Apostle himself advises us: *...Be not led away with various and strange doctrines...* [Heb 13:9].

1224: That God Who speaks in the Scriptures, speaks also in Tradition. This is found in the books of the ancient and venerated Fathers, so esteemed for their doctrine and their holiness. These we should follow, much more than the modern wise people. God Himself has given to us these most holy Fathers, who are at the same time, most learned. He has given them to us as Pastors and Doctors. They have been given the charge to perfect the elect of the Church. They have been granted the task to carry on the grand work of salvation, to build up the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. This is so that we will not be like children, carried this way and that, and that we be not swept away and blown by every kind of doctrine that might be introduced by the malice of human beings and by their astuteness, to tumble us into error. Paul tells us again: *... and he gave others some pastors and doctors...* [Ep 4:11]. *..., for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...* [v. 12] *... that henceforth, we be no more like children tossed to and fro, and carried by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive...* [v. 14].

1225: Whoever is truly wise, or would like to come wise, will seek the wisdom of all the ancients, says the Holy Spirit: *...The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients...* [Si 39:1]. Of the ancients, and not of the moderns - this is the authentic wisdom. In the ancients, and not of the moderns - this is the genuine prudence: *...In the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days, prudence...* [Jb 12:12]. The speech of the moderns does not penetrate, but rather delights very much those who read them, or hear them. This is not the style of the wise. According to the Holy Spirit, the words of the wise person are pungent: *...the words of the wise are goads...* [Qo 12:11]. They provoke the sinner to conversion: *...they are as nails, deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one shepherd...* ib.

1226: These words of the wise are firm, and deeply piercing, as nails driven in deeply. Such are the doctrines that come from the counsel of the saints, and in the unanimous consensus of all the masters and doctors, they all originate from one single Shepherd, who is Christ, Who is God. Thus, no matter how many there may be who teach, the Author, however, of this doctrine, is only One, that is, the Lord: *...more than these, my son, require not...* [ib. v. 12]. So, my beloved, seek nothing other than these - do not try anything else, do not presume anything. Follow along in the footsteps of your elders, and do not distance yourselves from their authority: *... of making many books, there is no end...* [ib]. If you look for many things, there will come into your hands an infinite number of all kinds of books that will lead you into error.

Up to this point, it has been the Holy Spirit speaking to you, along with the Commentary of Jerome [*In Ecclesiasten*, ib.. t. 3, pp. 494 B, ff.].

1227: It is confirmed, then, that God's Word revealed in the Scriptures, and in Tradition is the sole Infallible Rule of our believing, hoping and operating, if indeed we wish to find the truth, and achieve salvation.

- What will, then, happen to us, poor ignorant people, who do not know how to read the Scriptures?

- It is not necessary for the ignorant to read the Scriptures.

- Will it suffice for us, then, that the learned read the Scriptures?

- It is not enough for the learned to read the Scriptures. For both the learned as well as for the ignorant there is necessary the Magisterium of the Church.

The Church has the authority to propose the word of God, to explain it, to determine in its legitimate sense. The ignorant should not despair: he has a visible, universal teacher: the Catholic Church. The learned should not presume: for he has over him a judge that is still alive, infallible, supreme: the Roman Catholic Church.

1228: Would anyone perhaps believe that he is sufficiently learned, that for him, there suffices the acuteness of his own power of reasoning? No, says St. Augustine [*In Io. Ev.* tr. 40, 9. (t. 3/2, p 568 F)]: we believe that we might know, and not that we believe because we do not know: 'We believe in order that we might know; we do not know so that we must believe.' And what else is faith than to believe that which one does not see?

1229: Would anyone think that he is already sufficiently holy, that to him are sufficient only his own private lights? Let us be very careful, says the same Father [St. Augustine, in *De Doctr. Christ.*, in Prol., 6 (t. 3.1, 3 F)], let us guard ourselves from such temptations of such pride, and rather let us think that Paul, the Apostle Himself, even though instructed by the Voice of God and by the Spirit of God, was sent to someone else to find out what he should do:...*what will You have me to do?*... [Ac 9:6].

And let us think that Cornelius, even though he had been assured by the Angel that his prayers had been heard, and had accepted the alms, was nonetheless committed to have instructions from St. Peter. From his mouth he could have learned that he had to believe, to hope and to love.

1230: But no, my brothers and sisters. God's Word is the Rule of our believing, hoping and operating: but, it is necessary to hear the Word of God from the Church. Whoever does not listen to the Church is declared by Christ Himself [Mt 18:17] no longer one of the faithful, but a gentile: *...And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the publican...* Mt 18:17]. The Holy Spirit says also in Malachi [2:7] quite clearly: *... the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge...* It is certain that the Church has been made the Depository and Guardian by God Himself of His Word.

1231: *... O Timothy, keep what is committed to your trust...* [1 Tm 2:20]. So it is that the lips of the Priest of the Church guard its knowledge: *...they shall seek the law at his mouth...* [Mt 23:2]. Not well, my brothers and sisters: And the people will seek the Law, that is, the Rule, not from the Law, nor from the Rule itself, but from the lips of the priest, from the mouth of the Church that proposes it: 'from his mouth...'

1232: In fact, in the controversy between Paul and those of Antioch [Ac 15:1, ff.], regarding the matter of faith, they did not appeal directly to the Scriptures to define the matter. The appeal was made rather to the Apostles and the Elders of Jerusalem. the Apostles did not, neither did the Elders, make the Scriptures the judge, but they themselves and the Holy Spirit: *... it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...* [Ac 15:28]. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the Letter, but in the Spirit; not in the syllables, but in hearts. There is a most sublime reflection on the part of that noble theologian, Melchior Cano [*De locis theologicis*, 2, 7]. The Church is the column and the firmament of the truth: *... the pillar and the ground of truth...* [1 Tm 3:15].

1233: And by the word 'Church', there are not to be understood the lowest members of the Mystical Body of Christ, but the Bishops and the Supreme Shepherds of Christ's flock. In fact, the Bishops of the Church are the sole judges authorized by God. The custom of the Church confirms this. And besides, not all are doctors, according to St. Paul [1 Co 12:29]. Furthermore, to feed with the knowledge and the doctrines proper to the Shepherds, that is the Bishops [Ac 20:28]. Finally, a certain doctrine, contrary to this, one cannot and should not in these time be ignorant of it. It has been condemned with an authentic censure [Pius VI, *Errors of the Synod of Pistoia. Errors about the Church, Auctorem Fidei*, n. 10, August 28, 1794 - Denz. 1510].

1234: It is these Shepherds, therefore, that the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God, that He purchased with His Blood [Ac 20:28] - upon these Shepherds, who are legitimate, we must depend. We need to await from them that there be proposed and explained, and in its true sense 'declared', God's Word revealed in the Scriptures and in Tradition, as the unique and infallible Rule of our thinking and

operating. And we must follow this faithfully, constantly, if we wish to arrive at the knowledge of the Truth, and at the possession of supernatural beatitude, eternal happiness, for which we hope in God and with God: *...and whoever shall follow this rule, peace on them...* [Ga 6:16].

1235: This is the Rule, this is the **Star**, that we must follow. Let us walk, then, let us walk worthily toward the goal to which we have been called. St. Paul tells us: *...I ... beseech you, (by the very chains with which he was held bound in his apostolate) I beseech you, a prisoner in the Lord; that you walk worthily of the vocation in which you are called...* [Ep 4:1]. *... with all simplicity and mildness, with patience, supporting one another...* [v. 2].

1236: It is necessary to walk worthily in this vocation, submitting our intellects with humble obsequiousness to believe the Divine Word, ‘with all simplicity’ [ib., v. 2]. We are not to resist with obstinate contradiction the authoritative judgments of those legitimate Shepherds, who have the right from God Himself to propose this and to explain this. ‘With mildness’ [ib.]. This is done by overcoming with invincible patience calumnies, derision, opposition, that come from the enemies of the faith and of peace and of the Church: ‘With patience’ [ib.]. We must support with reciprocal love, to walk together, bearing the burdens of one another, all of us who have the same vocation together: ‘supporting one another with charity...’

1237: *...careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...* [Ep 4:3]. By the grace of God, this unity of spirit, or faith, we do possess it. It is enough for us to conserve it: ‘to keep.’ For this, though, there is necessary vigilance, concern, diligence to keep it: ‘careful’ [ib.]. One is kept in the bond of peace, of charity, if we are well united and bonded among us with love, and all are thus joined together and united. When this is so, we will have a great attachment to the Shepherds of the Church, whom we must follow. This is especially due to the Supreme Shepherd, the center of unity: *... careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...* [v. 3].

1238: ‘One body’ [v. 4]. We are one sole body, of which Christ is the Head, and all of us are its members. Among the members of this body, some have the office of presiding and guiding, like the eyes and the tongue. Others have only the office to obey, to follow, as the hands and the feet: ‘One Body and One Spirit’ [v. 4]. There should not be among us diversity of sentences, division of parties: but one same spirit of faith should animate all, as we are one sole body. One sole supernatural end to that to which we all tend: *... as you are called in one hope of your calling...* [ib.].

1239: One sole is the Author of this end and the Director toward this end. If many Shepherds do rule over us, they rule us only in His authority, in His Name: ‘One Lord’ [v. 5]. One only is the Rule, only one is the **Star** that points out the way: the Divine Word, object of our faith: ‘One Faith’ [ib.]. Only one is the East in which our **Star** appears, and **from Whom we all equally take our movement**, which is our Baptism. This is called **the Sacrament of Illumination and of Faith**. [cf. **MssB # 244:** Fr. Bertoni’s catechetical instructions on ‘One Baptism’].

1240: One sole God, object of our Beatitude: ‘One God’ [v. 6], and the Father of all, Who invites us to this Beatitude: *...and Father of all...* [v. 6]. He is above all with His truth, to illumine all to come to know it: *... Who is above all...* [ib.] and He is through all things with His Providence to direct all to find this: *... and through all...* [ib.] And finally, He is Indwelling all with His grace, as he **Interior Principle**, to move all to seek this: *... and in us all..* [ib.]

To whom be glory forever!

[The End]

§§§

By Way of Conclusion:

Comments from a Modern Theologian⁷

[1] Fr. Bertoni’s summarizing thoughts, about the **Indwelling Grace** as our **Interior Principle** [cf. # 1240] - and his view that **only One is the Orient in which our star appears, and from Whom we all equally take our movement** [cf. # 1239] - as well as his reference to **Pius VI, regarding the Errors of the Synod of Pistoia. *Auctorem Fidei*, of August 28, 1794** [# 1233] - bring us to these insightful reflections of Fr. von Balthasar. One of his more beautiful positions is **The Christological Constellation of Jesus Christ, in Whose orbit, and certain law of gravity, circulate the NT saints, especially Mary and the Apostles**. This is applied in response to those who would reduce the “**Roman Principle**” of the Pontiff, directly a successor of the person of St. Peter. Called as we are to the “difficult and arduous” vocation of offering our lives as the ***Missionarii Apostolici in obsequium Episcoporum***, we would do well to ponder these teachings of the Church in our ecclesial service.

⁷Fr. Hans Urs vonBalthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius 1966, pp. 131-145, passim.

[2] In what, then, is the **'Roman Principle'** embedded? Two answers must be rejected as inadequate:

-If we suppose that this principle is embedded only in the universal Church, the conclusion readily follows: "... authority is given by God to the [whole] Church, to be transmitted by her to the shepherds who are her servants for the good of souls." This is "to be understood in the sense that the authority of the ecclesial office and ecclesial leadership is transferred by the community of the faithful to the Shepherds". This statement of the Council of Pistoia was condemned by Pius VI, as 'heretical', among "The Errors of the Synod of Pistoia." What this Synod did was to try to make the universal Church appear as the final forum, whose relation with the redemptive event is no longer perceptible.

- the second is the view of Lammenais who questions the "Roman Principle" in the entirety of God's revelation in human history - where the papacy becomes nothing more than a current representation of the God-given natural law of authority. The outlines of Salvation History, as well as of the Church, become blurred.

3] Both of these attempts miss the obvious point in the history of Christian origins, which is **Divine Revelation**. The Office of Peter derives from his real and unique relationship with Jesus Christ - a relationship which remains sharply defined and distinct. This Office of Peter and his Successors may never be treated in isolation. The *mysterium* of the Church derives from the *mysterium* of Jesus Christ - none of it makes sense when these are isolated.

[3] Such isolation of the Roman Primacy has also been attempted within the Church. There can be no contrast between Peter and John, between an official clerical theology and a more or less private spirituality - there is no opposition between Institution and Charism. Only in a stable **integration** can the primacy's function be understood in its vital meaning. In the Mystical Body, everything is **interrelated**: - this is already evident in the central personality of Jesus Christ. He can never be detached from His **Trinitarian Relationships**, nor from His **Salvation-Historical ecclesial context**. Jesus Christ is not a "program", but a man of flesh and blood assumed by a Divine Person.

[4] The sacraments contain and confer the grace they visibly signify. Therefore, in His Incarnation, Jesus Christ, in His hidden and public life, in his Paschal Mystery is the Primordial Sacrament. The Giver is God the Father - and the Saving Grace bestowed through the sacramentality of Jesus Christ is God's Holy Spirit. The Father is greater than Jesus [cf. Jn 14:28] - Because Jesus has come in the Father's Name [cf. Jn 5:43] - Jesus seeks the Will of Him Who sent Him [cf. Jn 6:38].

B. Ps 19: The “Christological Constellation” in the Apostolic Mission - A Psalm used for the Feast of the Apostles

Introduction: The “Christological Constellation”⁸

[1] All human beings are **interrelated** in a kind of human constellation. One sole human being is a contradiction in terms. Jesus is no exception: as God, as well as man, He exists only in His relation to the Father in the unity of the divine Holy Spirit. Hence, Jesus’ **relation** to others cannot be limited solely to His human nature. This **constellation** of His: toward the Trinity of Persons, and toward the infinity of human beings is **an inner determinant** for Him. He cannot be detached from His **constitutive human group**.

[a] In this group, we can mention the important persons of his public and private life: Joseph, Mary Magdalen, Martha and Mary, the sympathetic Jews: Simon, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, John the Baptist - even Judas Iscariot. Moses and Elijah might be added as they are present in the Transfiguration, and play an important role in the understanding of Jesus’ Mission.

[b] Of major interest to us here would be **John the Baptist, Jesus’ Mother and the Twelve, the Beloved Disciple** - and the Apostle to the Gentiles, **Paul**. These pertain in unique manner to the **Constellation of Jesus**, and are integral to Christology. Jesus’ **relationship** to each of these is in accord with the Father’s Plan of Salvation.

[2] **Chronological sequence** also has its importance: at the beginning, at the center of the Incarnation, stands **Mary**, the perfect Handmaiden of the Lord, consenting to be the Mother of her Son, and all His work. **John the Baptist** with his eschatological preaching and penitential baptizing play a significant role in the preparation for the way of the Lord.

[a] **Mary’s** last recorded words in Scripture happen at Cana [Jn 2]: ‘Do whatever He tells you!’ Mary is particularly blessed because she always did the Lord’s Will. Her *Magnificat* is now the Church’s great Canticle of Mercy.

[b.] **John the Baptist** is the **special friend of the Bridegroom** [cf. Jn 3:29] - the Apostles later became “**friends**” in the hour of the **Eucharist** [cf. Jn 15:14-15]. These two are the great intercessors before the Divine Judge. Both Mary and John the

⁸cf. Fr. H.Urs VonBalthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, o.c., pp. 136, ff.

Baptist pertain to the passing over from the Old Covenant to the New. He is celebrated before Peter and Paul - with his celebration, in the northern hemisphere, the days begin to decrease, due to his spirituality: **He must increase, while I decrease** [cf. Jn 3:30]. Theology needs to make more of the great Precursor - he is the Elijah who is to come, more than a prophet, the greatest born of women [cf. Mt 11:9, 11, 14].

[3] **The Calling of the Twelve** in Mk, is one of Jesus' first acts, rooted in His prayer. In forming the Twelve to be the core of a wider circle of disciples, Jesus seeks to make them understand His Person and His Mission. They are to abide in him, as He in they - and the Father in Him. They are to put on His mind, to follow after Him, to imitate Him. They are sent on a varied Apostolic Mission - the very Mission that Jesus received from His Father.

[4] Within the Twelve, Peter and John stand out: Peter saw uniquely in Jesus' own authority and thus, he needs to share specially in **Jesus' spirit of service**, and willingness to suffer. The Primacy of Peter is put early in the Gospel of the Beloved Disciple [cf. Jn 1:42]. Peter is given the task of office, and John the office of love - yet, it is from Peter that the Lord asks the greater love - indicating that love is the office, and all office is meant to be loving.

[5] The one born out of season is Paul, equal to the Twelve. He never knew the earthly Jesus and has to fight hard for his equality among the inner circle. Paul represents the **kenosis of Jesus Christ**, a person modeled on Jesus Christ.

[6] Among the 12, there is clearly a **Collegium** and no confusion of tasks: Mary is immaculate, Peter is infallible, and Paul is the Doctor to the Gentiles - and these tasks and spheres of service. No one confuses to understand this **Christological Constellation**, one needs faith - followed by a most attentive reading of the New Testament, the fulfillment of the Old.

§§§

Presentation: Ps 19: Two Glories of God: the Spectacular Firmament and the Torah.

[1] For most interpreters of this beautiful Psalm, it is actually a composition of two ancient Poems, distinct by style, and perhaps composed by different authors. This seems evident by pondering the difference of the themes presented:

- one Hymn is directed to the Creator of the Universe, and is analogous with Ps 8;

- this is followed, then, by a didactic Hymn that honors the **TORAH**, that is more along the lines of Ps 119 - the longest of the entire Psalter, with 8 verses for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Ps 19 is, of course, much abbreviated synthesis.

There are even a few scholars who maintain that this Ps 19 is really a third Psalm - or, at least a remnant of one - including verses 1-4, that is concerned with the heavens in general - and then, v. 5, begins with the brilliant sun, bursting forth for the beginning of a new day.

[2] The first Canticle in this complexity is truly a work of art, a magisterial interpretation of nature from a religious perspective. It is a poem full of majesty and also of mystery: the heavens offer to the Creator a two-fold testimony:

- a witness of brilliant splendor during the day;
- and a testimony of mysterious grandeur during the night.

This witness goes on and on, without any interruption, with a fervor that is always renewed.

[3] This is easily compared to a solemn **kerygma**, the uninterrupted communication of God's word - from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof - from the crossing of the blue seas and the blue skies - bringing the Word of God as in fulfillment in our Stigmatine world of Fr. Bertoni's great ideal: ***quocumque euntes in dioecesi et mundo***. This is the great challenge of the Gospel, one clearly grasped, lived and suffered by St. John the Baptist and the Apostles, including Paul - in continuing the same Apostolic Mission that Jesus had received from His Father:

"...John the Baptist was in the desert, proclaiming a baptism of penance...[cf. Mk 1:4, ff.] ... After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There He proclaimed the Gospel from God saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Gospel..'"

"... the Gospel must be proclaimed to all nations [ib, v. 10].

"...You remember, brothers, with what unsparing energy we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you, while we were proclaiming the gospel of God to you..." [cf. 1 Th 2:9].

"... as long as you persevere and stand firm on the solid base of faith, never letting ourselves drift away from the hope promised by the Gospel, which you have heard, and which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven and which I, Paul, have become the servant..." [cf. 1 Th 2:9; cf. also Col 1:2, ff.]

[4] The solemn proclamation of God's word goes on without interruption down through the long centuries of the Church. It goes on day and night also, continuously, from nature's pulpit, the Divine Teacher's chair, the Catechist's class - in the firmament above. The chanting of the sun conducts the day's symphony - while the stars sing out through the long dark night: a natural inspiration to the Stigmatine. Each and every Stigmatine - *quicumque sodalis* - is invited to offer his witness of hope to the People of God in this new Millennium. The bridge between the two is the **Day-Star**, the last of the night stars to disappear.

[5] After these two opening verses proclaim the Lord in all their brilliance, the heavens, the vault of heaven, and then the day discoursing today - all of a sudden, there is a shift. It may be that this section was once more developed. However, here the **Canticle of the Day** is complemented by the **Melody of the Night**. Some scholars express their regret that there might be some verses lost that would have been here originally.

[6] Nonetheless, what we do have here, at least in the harmonious estimation of many serious scholars, one of the greatest poetic compositions that have come down to us. There is a very clear theology behind this poem as its basis: there is not even a hint of pantheism here, or any attempt to identify God and the stars. Neither is there any dualism that would make of the sun some kind of "rival" for God. These doctrines would be totally unacceptable to biblical faith.

[a] There was a contemporary Ugaritic literature that does remember the sun as both hero and spouse, who leads the goddess Anath into his pavilion. There is absolutely not even the slightest hint here of any mythical marriage. The borrowed terms are no more than metaphorical. The mythological climate is simply non-existent here.

[b] In a spiritual sense, all concurs to define by bold images from popular folklore, the absolute transcendence of God. God is simply supra-cosmic [the stars are His foot-stool; or, He blew them out of his mouth on a cold evening, or set them with His divine fingers in the awesome heights] - He is supra-regional [He does not live on the Mountain of God, but descends for a visitation; He does not even dwell in the Temple, but His Glory is there] - He is supra-temporal [even though honored by seasonal liturgies, He does not sleep at night, no merely be present in the good times: He is the God who is, was and ever will be!]. He is far beyond all He created yet in it all - and personally present to anyone in the state of grace.

[c] The Psalmist does manifest a sublime sense of the magnificence of created nature. However, this is not his ultimate goal, as he also deciphers, interprets immediately the grandeur and this draws from him a magnificent sense of adoration:

“...If [there are those] who are charmed by the beauty [of the created works] and taken these for gods, let them know how much their Maker excels them, since it was the very source of beauty that created them. And if they have been impressed by their power and energy, let them deduce from these how much mightier is he that has formed them, since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, **by analogy**, contemplate their Author...” [cf. Ws 13:5].

“... ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind’s understanding of created things...” [cf. Rm 1:20, ff.]

[7] This is indeed a Nature Psalm - and perhaps not the same as the great metaphorical frescoes offered in other Psalms [e.g., Ps 105]. The scope of this latter is to provide God’s People with a Theophany of History, and an appeal to the brilliant divine interventions that bring salvation to fruition.

[a] Certainly the pious reader might make such transpositions through personal reflection - however, perhaps it needs to be said that this would not respond to the original thought of the Psalmist. There does not seem to be here any “philosophizing” on the part of the Psalmist regarding Israel’s sacred history. This pious believer of long ago simply discovers God in His created universe, and makes his own contribution to the testimony regarding this in a profound manner.

[b] What this Canticle chants is the authentic beauty of the cosmos, the sun and the stars in the heavens. There does not seem to be present here, at least immediately, any exaggerated effort to think of these natural wonders as luminous symbols and active indications of Divine Providence. It does not seem, at least to some interpreters, that Part I of this Psalm is a kind of symbol of Part II, i.e., that the great lights of the created universe are the mass of human beings what the **Torah** is meant to be for all.

[8] From a stylistic point of view, many literary scholars have shown their admiration for this Psalm. While its style may not have any pretensions for great originality, its clarity and its power remain incontestably quite coherent. Despite its brevity, this is one of the classical examples of ancient pedagogy. This brief Canticle compares favorably with other Hymns to the Sun. The many such composition, or

canticles to the morning, or the New Dawn, do not have much over this wonderful inspired Poem: so many other such compositions fall into a kind of banal naturalism or pious sentimentality. This Psalm 19 A has God directly in its sights. This Psalm is not aiming at any kind of literary notoriety, but imply to praise God, and testify to His worship. This poem undoubtedly would have had some sublime effect on the likes of St. Francis of Assisi and his Canticle of the Sun.

[9] The title given to this Psalm holds that King David was the Author of this Canticle. Some see that the poetry contained here is not unlike some ancient Canaanite compositions, which would imply a poem of real antiquity, perhaps hundreds of years before David. However, there are likewise those who hold that the author of Ps 19 A is the same as that for Ps 8. But, there are also many other interpreters - perhaps the majority - who hold that whoever did write this Psalm, it would have been quite late, but there was a concerted effort at “archaicism.”

[10] The second poem, Psalm 19 B, is a Wisdom Composition - somewhat in the spirit of Ps 119, but in its brevity, surpasses the very lengthy Ps 119 in its praises of the Law of Yahweh: and both Ps 19 B and Ps 119, serve as a commentary on Ps 1:”... how blessed is anyone who delights in the Law of God and murmurs His law day and night...” [cf. Ps 1].

[a] Ps 19 B celebrates the **Torah** in Litanic form, alternatively, praising the intrinsic excellence of the Law, as well as its benefits for human beings [cf. vv. 7-10]. There is in this mixture of an objective description and a subjective impression of a fervent believer. this is indeed a singular work of art, which produces a happy effect on the attentive and pious reader. Nothing seems to make a greater impression on one than a truly sublime discourse presented in skillful language.

[b] However, Ps 19 B is not just in praise of the Law - there are also didactic verses [11-13]. In the eyes of this Psalmist what matters before the Lord is that each one should present an extreme care to live in conformity with the prescriptions of the Lord. It is also necessary for the pious believer, one who is conscious of his/her own short-comings, to beseech the Lord for the grace to penetrate, fathom His will. The Psalmist wants to be sure that his/her lips and heart are in harmony with what the Lord really wants.

[c] There is to be noted throughout this poem a touching reference to the love of God, the Author of all Perfection. The piety of this poem seems to be one that flows from a sense of intimacy, friendship with God. This may be noted in the familiar way the psalmist thinks of God’s judgments: *...more desirable than gold... sweeter*

than honey that drips from the comb... [v. 10]. This kind of accolade is quite familiar to Wisdom tradition:

“...How pleasant Your promise is to my palate, sweeter than honey in my mouth...” [cf. Ps 119:103].

“...Kindly words are a honey-comb, sweet to the palate, to the taste, wholesome to the body...” [cf. Pr 16:24].

“...eat honey, my child, since it is good; honey that drips from the comb is sweet to the taste: and so, for sure, will wisdom be to your soul; find it and you will have a future and your hope will not be short...” [cf. Pr 24:13].

“...Your lips, My promised bride, distil wild honey. Honey and milk are under your tongue; and the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon...” [cf. Ct 4:11].

“... Approach Me, you who desire Me, and take your fill of My fruits; for memories of Me are sweeter than honey, inheriting Me is sweeter than the honeycomb. They who eat Me will hunger for more, they who drink Me, will thirst for more...” [cf. Si 24:19].

[d] From a stylistic point of view, many experts hold that this Psalm is near perfection.

[e] There is likewise this particular: between vv. 7-10, there is a series of words that are synonyms for the **Torah**: Law, Decree, Precepts, Commandments, Fear of the Lord, Commandments, Judgments. Ps 119 will repeat these words abundantly in that long poem, much like the **Ave** in a chaplet. The image is that of a child seeking the sweetest words that he/she could offer to say to one's parent to be the more ingratiated to the other. Most will hold that repetition is a rhetorical device that provides a most excellent means of spiritual pedagogy. These are the conceptual nuances more than an emphasis to convince one, this repetition of synonyms.

[f] There are many scholars who would like to believe that for many internal indications this poem would most likely pertain to that period of time following the Babylonian Captivity [587 b.C.e.]. This would be the period of restoration: under the spiritual influence of Esdras, the **Torah** would penetrate and dominate the life of the re-patriates more and more. The restored Judaism will find strength entrenched behind the precepts of the **Torah**. Literature of that period would be dedicated to singing the praises of God's Law.

[g] Such diverse chants and canticles in this last period of Israel's history could only have come together for these two motives:

- a liturgical motive;
- an intention of piety.

There could hardly be any greater incentive to increase the fervor of Yahwism than to emphasize by bringing together the certain similitude that exists both for the witness that such things render to God, as well as the benefit they confer on human beings - between the physical world of nature, and the revealed Law of God. Both this magnificent cosmos, and the extraordinary Law of God are each in its own way, outstanding achievements of God. Human beings, the high-point of the created universe - as well as the Law, make known the infinite predictions of the Creator and Law-giver.

[11] Basically, this ascent from the contemplation of the cosmos, to the acceptance of like wonders in the revelation of God's Law, is a fundamental sapiential theme. The rabbinic tradition had already tapped into this: in the same way that the created universe is enlightened by the sun, so the human soul is expanded and elevated to its inherent fullness by means of living the **Torah**. What the sun is for the skies, so the **Torah** is for the human soul. All of nature lives by the sun - and every soul is invited to live by the **Torah**. What the sun clarifies for the eyes of the body, the **Torah** enlightens the eyes of the soul.

[12] The coming together of the brilliant sun in the heavens and the Law of God in human hearts is presented also by the Prophet Malachi: *"... For look, the day is coming, like a furnace. All the proud and evil-doers will be the stubble, and the Day, when it comes will set them ablaze, says Yahweh Sabaoth, leaving them neither root or branch ... But for you who fear My Name, the Sun of Justice will rise with healing in His rays, and you will come out, leaping like calves from the stall, and trample on the wicked, who will be like ashes under the soles of your feet. in the day when I call..... Remember the Law of My servant, Moses, to whom at Horeb I prescribed decrees and rulings for all Israel..."* [cf. Mal 3:20-22].

[a] Philosophers - even Kant - compared the starry night to the Moral Law. These are two realities, pertaining to different orders, that inspire admiration...emulation,,,? [cf. St. Clement of Rome and order in the Church].

[b] God is the unique author of the beauty of nature - but He is even more sublimely reflected in the mind and heart of anyone who would live His Word.

[13] The fullness of this tradition perhaps is found in Paul's thought that the Incarnate word **re-capitulates** and **renews** in Himself all things: *"... by feeling their way towards Him, succeed in finding Him. Indeed He is not far from any one of us... since it is in him that we live, and move and exist, as indeed some of your own writers have said..."* [cf. Ac 17:27, ff.].

[14] A few texts on **Re-capitulation**:

"... yet, for us, there is only one God, the Father, from Whom all things come and for Whom we exist - and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all things come and through Whom we exist..." [cf. I Co 8:6]

"...We are all aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been moaning in labor pains. And not only that: we, too, have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping - nobody goes on hoping for what he can already see..." [cf. Rm 9, passim].

"...for Him to act when things had run their course: that He would bring together everything under Christ as Head..." [cf. E[1:10].

...He has put all things together under his feet, and made him, as he is above all things, the Head of the Church - which is His body, the fullness of Him Who is filled all in all..." [v. 23]

"...The one who went down is none other than the one who went up above the heavens to fill all things..." [cf. Ep 4:9, ff.]

"... He is the image of the unseen Go, the first-born of all creation, for in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth... in Him all things hold together...and He is the Head of the Body... He is the beginning, the first-born... because God wanted all things, all fullness to be found in Him, and thorough Him to reconcile all things to Him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, by making peace through His death on the Cross..." [cf. Col 1;14, ff.].

"...No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven..." [cf. Jn 3:13].

[15] It is in this sense that we can understand **Christogenesis**, or Pope Pius X's papal motto: ***Instaurare omnia in Christo***. There is the restoration of all the forces and powers of the universe in the Incarnation of the Word of God. it will be in Him, that not only humanity, but also the entire Cosmos, in some mysterious manner, will be restored, created anew.

[16] These two themes: the brilliance of the cosmos, and that of the Word of God for the moral, spiritual life - seem also by nature to be comparable, one to the other. Even the ancient Babylonians had prayers to the "sun of justice."

Brief Out-lines of the Two Poems

I. Ps 19 A

The Brilliance of the Firmament

1. The Canticle of the Heavens [vv. 1 & 2].
2. Eloquent Silence
 - a. Universal message, to the far ends of the world [vv. 3 & 4].
3. Hymn to the Sun - Spouse and champion
 - a. The Passing of the Night [spouse] [v. 4 b].
 - b. Champion on he run [v. 5 b].
4. From East to West: all under its sway [v. 6]

Ps 19 B

The Brilliance of the *Torah*

1. The Perfection of the Law: Beneficence.
 - a. Refreshment
 - b. Faithful
 - c. Wisdom
 - 1.] Honest Joy
 - 2.] True Judgment
 - 3.] Better than Gold
 - 4.] Sweeter than Honey
2. Humble resolve
 - a. Reflection
 - b. Prayer for Humility
 - c. Resolve to avoid Sin.
3. Final Dedication
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Faith

§§§§§

Psalm 19 a

The Brilliance of the Firmament

1. The Canticle of the Heavens

Verse 1: "The heavens declare the glory of God, the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork..."

a. The Beauty of the Skies: gives praise to the Crator in a variety of ways: first of all, by the brilliance of the day and the sunshine. This expresses in an outstanding manner the transcendent brilliance which is proper to God alone: "...Yahwh is myLight and mysalvation, whom should I fear...? [cf. Ps 27:1].

b. This Light emanates from the Creator and radiates the external world, and constitutes His glory:

"... Who will put happiness before our eyes? Let the Light of Your face shine upon us... [cf. Ps 4:6].

"...I look up at the heavens, shaped by Your fingers, at the moon and the stars You set firm... what are human beings that You should spare a thought for him...? [cf. Ps 8].

"...Bless Yahweh, o my soul. Yahweh, my God, how great You are! clothed in majesty and splendor, wearing the light as a robe... [cf. Ps 104:1, ff.]

"...The Angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a blazing bush, but the bush was not being burnt up..." 'cf. Ex 3: 2, ff.]

"...Mount Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke, because Yahweh had descended on it in the form of fire... [cf. Ex 19:18].

"...Pride of the heights, a clear vault of the sky -such is the beauty of the heavens, a glorious sight. The sun, as he emerges, proclaims at his rising: 'How glorious a thing, the work of the Most High.. [cf. Si 43:1, ff.]

"... Wisdom is a reflection of the eternal light, untarnished mirror of God's active power, and image of His goodness.. [cf. Ws 7:26].

c. This brilliant radiance is some kind of a created manifestation of the uncreated God - this is one of the ways by which He manifests Himself to His creatures. The poets make clear that God is hidden, as revelation states, and nature is His temple. The human spirit can find Him everywhere when the heart contemplates. This world is the image, the reflection, the mirror of the divine perfections. All these vast attributes together would never add up to His magnificence, but they do give some idea.

2. The Stars

Verse 1 b: "... the vault of heaven proclaims His handiwork..."

a. The multiplicity of the stars on a clear night is an outstanding revelation. Their complexity and beauty people the skies over the vast desert is awesome contemplative silence. By their multiplicity, and regular movement, already chartered in biblical times, they give an extraordinary, outstanding idea of the Creator's art. The unknown Psalmist would say this beauty was all arranged by the "fingers of God": *"... I look up at the heavens, shaped by Your fingers, at the moon and the stars You set firm..." [cf. Ps 8:4]*

b. This idea is found in diverse ways in the Scriptures:

"...{God} sends light - and it goes, He recalls it - and trembling it obeys. The stars shine joyfully at their posts, when He calls them, they answer: 'Here we are'; they shine to delight their Creator. It is He who is our 'God, no other can compare with Him... [cf. Ba 3:34, ff.].

"... Who laid the concourse of the earth to the joyful concert of the morning stars...? and unanimous acclaim of the sons of God...? 'cf. Jb 38:7].

...When God created His works at the beginning, He assigned them their places as soon as they were made... [cf. Si 16:26].

...Next, I shall remind you of the works of the Lord, and tell you of what I have seen... How lovely all His works, how dazzling to the eyes. They all live and last forever, and whatever the circumstances, they obey... [cf. Si 42:15-25, ff.].

c. Of all the realities of the visible world, the wonders of the created universe, many of the ancients were really attracted to the wonder of the stars and the skies. In an outstanding manner, they almost lend themselves in a supereminent manner as the theatre for the Glory of God:

"...In His Palace, all cry: GLORY...! [cf. Ps 29].

...Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh Sabaoth, His glory fills the whole earth... [cf. Is 6:3, ff.].

d. Perhaps in a most spectacular manner, the skies over the Mediterranean basin deserve special consideration: with the clear sea below, and the limpid sky above - and then the changes brought by a sub-tropical climate and the endless spaces with its clear, dry air, all of this produces a wide variety of colors, perhaps emulated by the painters of the ICONS, with all their 'celestial' hues [in at least two senses of that term]. With all of these shades and hues, the ancient Hebrew became a sky-gazer! The believer would deduce from all this a revelation of the Glory of the Most High, all of this is the work of His hands, the accomplishment of His fingers - or, His warm breath on a cool evening!

e. The believer would see/her in all of this the eternal dialogue with the God of nature, singing His praises. It is to such thoughts, literature and inspired poetry that this believing, monotheistic people concentrated its whole genius - not so much to philosophizing, metaphysics and the like. All of this places one's mind and heart before the Most High, and the view is seductive. It is not so much that God is 'deduced' as the Prime Mover behind all this beauty. He is not a 'conclusion' that would flow after a long and tedious contemplation of verities. In this instance, the thought of Yahweh explodes on the human heart, like and early morning sun-rise - or, quiets the heart with the beauty of a starry night.

f. The created universe, in this sense, is seen as a grandiose and magnificent edifice - this is a work of art, both sculpturing and painting: the cosmos shows both the capacity of the architect and the ability of the painter. The mere glance at a beautiful sky would draw a more reflective contemplation of it - and this so often has inspired these ancient poets into a praising of the Creator of it all. The brilliant Author of it all is being chanted as a unique Sage!

g. The heavens are endowed with an attraction that is beyond compare, in the minds and hearts of many, inspiring a contemplative prayer on God. For so many, the splendor of the sky provides a unique proof of the existence of a Creator of it all. This is a 'cosmological' proof of the existence of God and of His prerogatives. The heavens, whether by day or by night, so often move artist, poets, people of art - and they also inspire adoration in believers. God seems to have made for this Psalmist of Ps 19 the most eloquent instrument of His divine glory. This Psalmist almost 'personifies' the sky: the vault of heaven chants the divine handiwork! Day preaches unto day, and the night proclaims such knowledge and experience of the most High.

h. This is a kind of 'theological cosmology' - or, 'cosmic contemplation'. The sky, for so many and for so long, as revealed the divine transcendence, His power, His sacred nature. The heavens reveal themselves as without boundaries, totally transcending the littleness of human beings. The celestial vault comes across as a reality that is so far beyond the grasp of ordinary human beings. The expression: "The Most High" becomes all the more understandable when a believer looks out at the sky: all of this wonder has been placed there by His hands, His fingers, it is but breath out of His mouth. The superior regions almost naturally acquire divine prestige, as they are so inaccessible to biblical humanity. Even in our own time, when the discoveries of outer space have indeed put "a man on the moon", there is still the attraction to go on.

i. The sky does symbolize in unique manner the divine transcendence, power, immutability - by their very existence. The Lord must exist beyond and above all this, elevated. Infinite, immutable, ever-present, all-powerful. This "spiritual deduction" is almost immediate, a spontaneous deduction - and through the ages has provided for so many a convincing argument for the divine existence. These great biblical poets never adored the skies as such, nor the sun, moon, or stars. It is simply that all these wonders have offered a redeye symbol of the One who is "Totally Other."

3. **Eloquent Silence:** "... no utterance at all, no speech, not a sound to be heard..."

a. The testimonies that the night and day offer in their own turn, much like two prodigious choirs of outstanding symphonies. It seems that there is a vast cosmic liturgy being celebrated - and in their proper cadence, night and day alternate, singing out the praises to the Creator and Law-giver, in perennial proclamation. They offer to the Sovereign Lord an uninterrupted Canticle of sublime praise.

b. The first of the choirs seems specialized in brilliant displays of light, and the roar of distant power. The second - with the beautiful tapestry of the distant stars and planets, offer perhaps more the themes of "mystery" and "sweetness, calm and quiet. The day offers a kind of a dynamic blaze of glory, that presents a brilliant display of radiance, all in honor of the Creator of it all. The Night, in its turn, seems to provide a quiet murmur or whisper, almost prayerful in its demeanor, of contemplative admiration. The night is so much like a religious Hymn of Love, prayed in the quiet hours of darkness. The brilliance of the stars in the dark night are much like a high pitched beautiful melody.

c. There is an extraordinary harmonious coordination between these two choirs. At the very instant one withdraws, the other comes on the scene, to pick up where its predecessor left off: much like the ***ACEMYTES***, the "non-sleepers" in the early Church, offering their perennial praise and proclamation, being offered to God. There can be no real comparison between the succeeding choirs - they are both comparable, and nothing negative can be said of either one. Night and day, alternating without interruption - and the beautiful harmony goes on down through the apparently endless ages: from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof, the praise of God goes on.

d. As each of the Choirs withdraws, it seems almost as though they "can hardly wait" to return: in fact, the day bursts forth from the pavillion, like a bridegroom ready to take on the burdens of the Day - and Night is ready to take up the Canticle of Praise at the proper time, with renewed vigor, and all refreshed. The brilliance of the sun explodes on the horizon - as the stars gradually permeate the quiet stillness in a magnificent Canticle of Harmony. The twinkling stars and the brilliant sun - all 'bespeak', 'proclaim' the outstanding Glory of God, and this will go on as long as the universe lasts.

e. There is indeed in all of this a poetic simplicity that chants the faith also of the Psalmist. Praise should be given as much as is dared - the Lord is really beyond

all praise, and never could the Lord of Hosts ever be praised enough. The choir of the day and night strive in a kind of mutual inspiration to improve ceaselessly, endlessly on their Canticle of Praise and Adoration.

4. A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE:

“... No utterance at all, no speech, not a sound to be heard, but from the entire earth the design stands out, this message reaches the whole world...”

a. The effect of these magnificent choirs is literally universal. The heavens have their own eloquence, even though they do not ‘say’ a single word. They have no specific language nor do they ‘say’ a single word. They have no specific language; nor do they have their own words, or audible voice: yet, their echo resounds over the ages, 24 hours a day for endless centuries. This particular poet is not ‘side-tracked’ by their ‘voices’ of creation - his sole emphasis is on the grandiose symphony of the universe. He offers his own ‘definition’ of God that would echo the angelic choirs of Isaiah: “... *and the seraphs were shouting these words to each other: Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth...*” [cf. Is 6: 3].

1.] Commentators have noted, then, reflecting on Ps 19 that the four corners of the globe speak a language that all the nations can understand. ‘the heavens speak their own language, have their own ‘hand-writing’: “... *have you grasped the celestial Laws? Could you make their writ run on earth...?*” [cf. Jb 38:33].

2.] The heavens have their own ‘script’, the writing of the skies - even Dante spoke of a New Language. St. John Chrysostom wrote of the silence of the heavens being a voice that over-powers the trumpet, or even the tuba! The voice of the heavens cries out to our eyes as well as to our ears - and chants the grandeur of the One who made them. In pondering the starry night, the perceptive person can read there more readily the eloquent message of their silence. Theirs is a message that reveals the glory and the all powerfulness of the Creator. St. Athanasias held that the firmament in its magnificence, its beauty, its order, is a most prestigious preacher of the Divine Artisan, Whose eloquence permeates the entire universe. The heavens, technically, do not have a voice, nor do they make any audible sound, and nothing is physically heard at this distance as coming from them. Nonetheless, their beautiful manner runs throughout the whole earth. All that they ‘say’, they make quite plain to the eye. The heavens above are the interpreter of the grandeur of God - the skies are His privileged interpreter, translator, mirror, reflection, sounding board, echo.

b. As would be expected, there are countless songs regarding the moon-lit, starry night, as well as the spectacular beauty of the sky - as there are master-pieces of commentaries and reflections. One would be St. Clement of Rome, pondering the beauties of the night sky of Rome, as did his successor some 1900 years later, Paul VI. In his ***Confessions***, when St. Augustine was looking everywhere for God, the stars respond to him: we are not your God, for He has also made us! [cf. ¶ Bk10, c. 6].

c. The scientist, Newton, remarked that this magnificent construction that gyrates around the sun, the planets and the comets, could only have come to birth by the commandment of an intelligent and all-powerful Being. And if the fixed stars are likewise the centers of similar systems, that would mean that they have been constructed in a parallel design, and all are submitted to the action of a single Master of the Universe. He is eternal and infinite, all-powerful and all-knowing: He lasts from eternity to eternity; present from the infinite and to the infinite ahead. He governs all and knows all, that which comes and all that goes.

d. The French poet, Paul Claudel, sees a reflection of the celestial language in crystals. We live in the midst of this wondrous liquidity - and the most eloquent response that we can muster, is silence. We are breathing in, drinking in, great mysteries. The whole universe is a poem without words that nourishes the heart and satisfies and challenges the intelligence.

e. In the once much quoted ***The Divine Milieu***, de Chardin asks pardon for the use of a sacred word to describe all this. While he does modify to some extent this expression, this is not to exclude its traditional meaning, but in order to include it in a more vast and total reality. We might say that the great mystery of Christianity is not exactly any Apparition, but rather the Transparency of God in the universe. This is not only your "Epiphany", o Jesus - but your "Diaphony."

f. Reflecting on the dogmatic sphere, one might say that the 'silent discourse' of Creation is like an echo, in common parlance, of that silent canticle, that pours forth from the depths of the divinity. This is seen [with IInd Is] as the Father singing to Himself, within the bosom of the Trinity, in the Person of the Eternal Word, in the Holy Spirit. One can imagine, with Rublev, and perhaps Zephaniah, a "dancing God!"

g. The Psalmist is using here the unique language of nature - that might simply pass over the head of most human beings, not enlightened by the faith and a poetic sense. The beauties of the created world need the 'explanation' of the uncreated word! The beauties and magnificence of the universe are a kind of self-

apologetics - yet, the revealed **Torah** is the indispensable key for the grasp of nature's most extraordinary testimony - even though it does have its own value and direct message:

"...[against any deification of nature]: some study these works and have not recognized the Artificer. Fire, however, or wind, or the swift air, the sphere of the stars, the impetuous water, heaven's laps, are what they have held to be the gods who govern the world, If, charmed by their beauty, they have taken these for gods, let them know how much the Master of these excels them, since it was the very source of beauty that created them. And if they have been impressed by their power and energy, let them deduce from these how much mightier is he that has formed them, since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures, we may, by analogy, contemplate their author..." [cf. Ws 13:5, ff.].

"... For what has been known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God made it plain to them, ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been seen by the mind's understanding of created things... And so, these people have no excuse..." [cf. Rm 1:19, ff.]

h. Later in the same Letter, Paul make use of this principle in his apostolic preaching even though he might, in truth, be referring to the preaching of the Prophets of old: *"... Indeed they have heard: in the entire earth, their message stands out, their voice reaches the whole world..." [cf. Rm10:18, citing Ps 19:4].*

i. St. Robert Bellarmine condenses the teaching of St. Augustine here: much like the heavens, the **Apostles** have been elevated above the created universe **by their contact with the Incarnate Word of God and their contemplation of Him**. This reflection was then dilated by their own apostolic charity, resplendent with wisdom, beautiful in their serenity that offers tranquillity to the spirit. They were rapid in their apostolic endeavors, that their obedience impressed on their intelligence. This extended the splendor of their teachings, overwhelming the obstinate with the thunder of their use of the divine word, up-ending unbelievers by the spectacle of their miracles. They bestowed so much on this earth, and asked for nothing in return. They were purified from any stain by the holiness of their lives. They were receptacles of the Divine Indwelling, thanks to the perfection of their justice.

j. The poet Claudel concluded using the principle in faith regarding Providence: everything happens in relationship to God, in this sense, everything has meaning. This is much like the 'rabbinic interpretation' of the Scriptures, which Paul seems to authorize.

3. HYMN TO THE SUN

a. The Passing of the Night: “...*High above He pitched a tent for the sun...*” Earlier this poet had proclaimed the beauty of the heavens, the vault that chants the Glory of God - this stretches from one horizon to the other:

“... [David’s Hymn of Victory] ...*Then the earth quaked, the heavens’ foundations shuddered...*” [cf. 2 S 2:22:8 -cf. Ps 18],

“...*He has traced a ring on the surface of the waters, at the boundary light and dark. The pillars of the heavens tremble, awe-struck at his threats...* [cf. Jb 26:10, ff.

“...*Sheer futility, Qoheleth says: Sheer futility: everything is futile! What profit can we show for all our toil, toiling under the sun? A generation goes, a generation comes, yet the earth stands firm forever. The sun rises, the sun sets; the to its place it speeds and there it rises...* [cf. Qo 1:1, ff.]

“...*When He fixed he heavens firm, I was there, when He drew a circle on the surface of the deep...* [cf. Pr 8:27].

b. Providence has provided the ‘night’s lodging’ for the sun. At one and the same time, this temporary dwelling is closed in, yet has its opening. It is much like a tent for the wandering nomads - and it is out of this Tent, from this Pavilion’, that the dawn comes. This is a classical image fairly well known throughout the entire Middle East: “[Solomon’s Prayer for his Temple]: ... *Then Solomon said: ‘Yahweh has chosen to dwell in a thick cloud, I have built you a princely dwelling, a residence for you forever...* [cf. I K 8:12].

c. Thus is understood a fulfillment of the ancient custom of establishing the “residence of the divinity” in a closed area, at the center of the Temple. Some see in all this perhaps a mythical image borrowed from the Canaanites. This image of the “pavilion” could very well pertain to the common font of the popular, universal conceptions.

d. In the early Church, the Manicheans understood the Incarnation of the word being associated not with human nature, but with the sun. This is found in the strange fascination and almost worship of the stars and planets. The Latin Fathers, however, interpreted all this metaphorically. For them, the splendors of the sun in the beauties of creation are the most prestigious mirror o the divinity: Light from Light - the biblical connection would be, at best, tenuous.

e. Power of the Sun: “...*the sun comes forth from his pavilion like a bridegroom, like a champion [athlete] he delights in the course to be run...*” [v. 5]

1.] The image here is the nuptial tent - sometimes set up on a simple dais, but very often quite richly ornamented and constructed. These would be set up on the occasion of nuptials, in which the newly weds would celebrate and consummate their marriage:

"... a call to repentance... Call the bridegroom from his bedroom and the bride from her bower... [cf. Jl 2:16]

...See where my beloved stands behind our wall. He looks at me through the window, he peers through the opening. My love lifts up his voice, he says to me: Come, then, my beloved, my lovely one, come! For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone... [cf. Sgs 3:9, ff.]

...[After the pillage of the Temple] ...every bridegroom took up a dirge, the bride sat grief-stricken on her marriage bed... [cf. 1 M 1:27].

2.] There are two images here: that of the **Spouse** and that of the **athlete**: these are used to describe the sun-rise, as a coming forth exuberantly from one's night's sleep. The images of the heroic athlete and the **Spouse** are often intertwined. Ethnologists have noted there is particular interest in the sun among the hunting tribes throughout Africa, as they find in the sun the image of the hunter chasing the clouds away. Following a prescribed arch, covering his territory well, nothing escapes the sun.

3.] Biblically, these two connected images seem to indicate these qualities: radiant vigor and youthful ardor: what is evident here is the happily married husband, rejoicing in his good fortune - and the highly trained athlete, one who is sure of ultimate success, a 'champion'. Each morning, the sun charges forth into the arena of the new day, and conquers the entire world - chasing away the darkness of the night in total victory. This imagery seems evident:

... I hear my love! See how he comes , leaping on the mountains, bounding over the hills. My love is like gazelle, like a young stag... [cf. Sgs 2:8].

...I sleep, but my heart is awake. I hear my love knocking. Open to me, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with the dew, my hair with the drops of night... [cf. Ct 5:2]

...It is the bridegroom who has the bride; and yet, the bridegroom's friend, who stands there and listens to him, is filled with joy at the bridegroom's vice. this is the joy I feel, and it is complete. He must grow greater, I must grow less... [cf. Jn 3:29, ff.]

4.] These texts seem to refer to ancient customs -= the cries of rejoicing at the engagement, the actual wedding and its eventual consummation. It is the poetic gift, under divine inspiration, that makes of these rather bold images, with all naturalness. The appealing and attractive husband, with athletic prowess, is an

apt image for the sun who once more conquers the clouds of day, enlightening the steps of the traveler. The nuptial image of the OT offers so many insights, as in Paul's words: this Mystery has many implications! [cf. Ep 5].

5.] Of course, the early Fathers of the Church often compared Christ to the Morning Star, the Sun itself. This would be the 'accommodated sense' of the text, regarding Christ's descent from on high, and His sojourn in our world. St. Augustine saw the Tabernacle of the Spouse to be the Church herself.

4. FROM EAST TO WEST: "... *Rising on the one horizon, he runs his circuit to the other, and nothing can escape his heat...* [cf. v. 6]

a. Holding total sway, there is no parcel of the universe that could escape his sway. The luminous radiance of the sun reaches into the most remote corners of the universe - and energizes so much else: brings new life, enkindles, warms, enlightens.

b. What never ceases to fascinate scientists is the cosmic influence of the sun's energies. By means of its intense radiance, the sun exercises a very real and quite complex effect on the cosmos. It would perhaps be impossible to list the individual effects of the rays of the sun in our world: the growth of plant and animal life, the influence on human metabolism. By its constant energizing activity the sun offers a most eloquent testimony of the presence of the Creator. Its terrifying radiance reaches the highest mountains, and enlightens the depths of the sea. With his radiant beauty, the sun chases away the darkness of the night - and wins this daily battle.

c. Small wonder, then, that **St. Francis of Assisi** would choose the Sun for the subject of his world famous "Canticle." The sun is more beautiful than all other creatures for the troubadour of Assisi. In the early morning when the sun rises, this could serve for everyone to praise the Lord of the entire Universe. There is needed the realization that all of this has been put in place for our utility, creation is for our salvation.

d. Implicit here is that the Psalmist holds that human beings have no excuse in lacking faith, praise of God, before such eloquent testimonies of nature. From these sacred wonders, each person should be elevated to some knowledge and understanding of God. There is this off-cited argument from both wisdom and the similar one from Romans:

...Yes, naturally stupid are all who unaware of God , and who, from good things seen, have not been able to discover Him-Who-Is - or, by studying His works, have not recognized the Artificer. Fire, however, or wind, or the swift air, the sphere of the stars, impetuous water, heaven's lamps, are what they have held to be gods who govern the world.

If, charmed by their beauty, they have taken them for gods, let them know how much the Master of these excels them.

And if they have been impressed by their power and energy, let them deduce from these how much mightier is He that has formed them, since through the grandeur and beauty of the creature, we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author.

Small blame, however, attaches to them, for perhaps they go astray only in their search for God and their eagerness to find him; familiar with His works, they investigate them and fall victim to appearances, seeing so much beauty.

But, even so, they have no excuse: if they are capable of acquiring enough knowledge to be able to investigate the world - how have they been so slow to find its Master...? [cf. Ws 13:1-9].

e. The author here present a general indictment of idolatry in its three major manifestations:

- divinization of natural forces and heavenly bodies [cf. 13:1-9];
- worship of man-made idols [cf. 13:10-15:17];
- worship of animals [15:18, ff.].

f. He apparently adopts a schematic arrangement already current, since similar classifications are found elsewhere in the writings of Hellenized Judaism, particularly Philo. the thought here, though, is original as is its treatment:

- of navigation [cf. 14:12-21];
- its evil consequences [cf. 14:22-31];
- and the privileged state of the Jewish People [15:1-15].

g. The spectacle and study of nature ought to raise the human spirit to a transcendent God, universal Creator. To see the Creator as the Source of the beauty that has been created [cf. v.3] is the "Greek touch" [cf. also Si 43:9-12]. The OT had already often praised the majesty and power of God as manifested in creation [cf. Jb 36:2-26; Ps 19:1, ff.; Is 40:12-14] but never the beauty of the world seen as a work of art, reflecting its Author].

... For what can b known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God has made it known and plain to them, ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and His everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things. And so these people have no excuse. they knew God, yet they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks to Him... their uncomprhending minds were darkened. While they claimed to be wise, in fact that were growing stupid, so much so that they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an imitation, for the image of a mortal being, or of birds, or of animals, or crawling things... they would not consent to acknowledge God... [cf. Rm 1:18-32].

h. The abrupt ending of the "Psalm 19 A" has led to speculation that originally this may have been part of a more extended "nature poem". The immediate theological application, however, would be in line with these following texts:

... no more will the sun give you daylight, nor moonlight shine on you, but Yahweh will be your splendor, your God will be your everlasting light... [cf. Is 60:19].

But for you that fear My name, the Sun of Justice will rise with its healing rays, and you will come out leaping like calves from the stall... [cf. MI 3:20].

i. Also here, Psalm 19 A serves as an admirable reflection on the brilliance, the power, and the energy of the Sun - and is immediately applied to the power of the **Torah**. This poem, then serves as an Introduction to the doctrinal theme of the manifestation of the divine will to Israel. It was the divine will, that through Israel, this spirituality would come known to the whole world. By its radiance, the sun gives testimony that is brilliant, far more than the rest of the planets visible here one earth, of the wisdom and salvific concern of God for humanity. **In the brilliance of the divine glory on Sinai, God has made the Torah the moral illumination of all human beings:**

j. The NT Echo:

... But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for He causes His sun to rise on the bad as well as on the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike... [cf. Mt 4:45, ff.].

...In the past, He allowed all the nations to go their own way; but even then, He did not leave you without evidence of Himself in the good things He does for you: He sends you rain from heaven and seasons of fruitfulness: He fills you with food and your hearts with merriment... [cf. Ac 14:17, ff.].

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II. Psalm 19 B The Brilliance of the **TORAH**

A Meditation Presentation [vv. 7-10]

There are eight dystychs here - with eight different words used to describe the **Torah** - **Decree, Law, Precepts, Commandment, Judgments, Fear, gold, Words**. these designate the various aspects of the Divine Law from the “D” era, as is noted more completely in Palm 119. These constitute a kind of Litany, and they celebrate - each one adding its own dimension - the beneficent dimension of God’s Word. From this solemn refrain, St. Augustine was able to deduce: this indeed is the Holy Spirit.

1. The Beneficence of the Law, the Word of God

a. Its Perfection, a Refreshment: v. 7 b: *... the Law of Yahweh is perfect, refreshment to the soul...*

1.] The **Torah**, the “Law”, is a broad term. In this sense, it implies God’s total disposition, whether oral, or written. It involves all the prescriptions of the Mosaic Legislation, as well as the divine instructions [as the exhortations, the promises, the threats]:

... the just man delights in the Law of Yahweh and murmurs His Law day and night... [cf. Ps 1:2].

... My people, listen to my teaching, pay attention to what I say... [cf. Ps 78:1, ff.].

[The ritual reading of the Law] ... Moses committed this Law to writing, and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the Ark of Yahweh’s Covenant, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses gave them this command: At the end of every seven years, at the time fixed for the year of remission, at the Feast of Shelters, when all Israel assembles in the presence of Yahweh, your God, in the place chosen by Him, you must proclaim this Law in the hearing of all Israel. Call all the people together, men, women and children, and the foreigner residing with you, so that, hearing it, they may learn to fear Yahweh, your God, and keep and observe all the words of the Law. their children who do not yet know it as yet, will hear it, and learn to fear Yahweh, your God, all the time you live in the country which you are crossing the Jordan to possess...” [cf. Dt 31:9-13].

... Only be strong and stand very firm and be careful to keep the whole Law which My servant, Moses, laid down for you. Do not swerve from this either right or left, and then you will succeed wherever you go... [cf. Jos 1:7, ff.].

... Have this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may carefully keep everything written in it... Have I not told you: Be strong and stand firm? Be fearless and undaunted, for go where you may, Yahweh your God is with you... [cf. v. 8].

... On the second day, the heads of the families of the whole people, and the Priests and the Levites, gathered round the Scribe Ezra to study the words of the Law,.. And written in the Law that Yahweh had prescribed through Moses, they found that the Israelites were to live in shelters during the Feast of the Seventh Month. So, they issued a proclamation and had it circulated in all their towns and in Jerusalem: Go into the hills and bring branches of olive, pine, myrtle, palm and other leafy trees, to make shelters, as it says in the Book. The people went out; they brought branches and made shelters, as it says in the Book. Each man had his roof, in their court-yards, in the precincts of the Ephraim Gate. The whole assembly, all who had returned from captivity, put up shelters and lived in them; and this the Israelites had not done from the days of Joshua, son of Nun, till that day; and there was very great merry-making. Each day, from the first day to the last one, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days; on the eighth day, as prescribed, they held a solemn assembly... [cf. Ne 8:13-18]

... Let your heart treasure what I have to say, keep my principles and you will live; acquire wisdom, acquire understanding... The first principle of wisdom; acquire wisdom; at the cost of all you have, acquire wisdom, understanding... [cf. Pr 4:7, ff.]

... those who forsake the LAW sing the praises of the wicked, those who observe the LAW are angered by them... An intelligent child is one who keeps the LAW: an associate of profligates bring shame on his father. Whoever refuses to listen to the LAW, such a one's prayer is an abomination... [cf. Pr 28:4, 7, 9].

... When there is no vision, people get out of hand; happy are they who keep the LAW... [cf. Pr 29:18].

2.] Emanating from God Himself, the LAW is naturally without fault: it cannot be criticized, increased or diminished:

... He is the Rock, His ways are perfect, His work is perfect - all His ways are equitable. A trustworthy God Who does no wrong, He is the Honest, the Upright One... [cf. Dt 32:4].

3.] This admirable LAW is but a ray that flows out from the divine truth - like limpid water from a stream, or a clear and brilliant radiance from the sun -

it issues forth from the divine goodness: this is the source of all divine revelation: His goodness and wisdom. It is impossible to think that God would have kept something back from the radiance of the qualities that would exist in the source. The divine LAW is the ultimate quest of human nature - it responds to all the needs, or desires of human beings, that are just and worthy. The Torah sustains, comforts, supports all of human life:

...Treat me with tenderness and I shall live, for your LAW is my delight... True to your word, support me and I shall live; do not disappoint me of my HOPE... [cf. Ps 119:7, 116]... Your instructions are upright forever, give me understanding and I shall live... I long for your salvation, Yahweh, Your Law is my delight... [cf. also vv. 144, 175]

4.] The NT echo:

...Thus, condemnation will never come to those who are in Christ Jesus; because the LAW of the Spirit, which gives life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do because of the weakness of human nature, God did by sending His own Son in the same human nature as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin and condemning sin in that human nature. This was so that the LAW's requirements might be fully satisfied in us as we direct our lives not by our natural inclinations but by the Spirit... All who are guided by the Spirit of god are sons of God, for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the spirit of adoption enabling us to cry out, ABBA, Father..>! [constant prayer, cf. Rm 8:27, ff.

... for anyone who is in Christ, there is a New Creation - the old order is gone now and the new is here... [cf. 2 Co 5:17].

b. The LAW is trustworthy Wisdom:

... the decree of Yahweh is trustworthy, wisdom for the simple...

1.] The "Decree" of the Lord seems to indicate here the testimony, the complexity of the divine dispositions. This would imply an official designation that has been guaranteed by the Legislator, perhaps the Decalogue. This is made up of those indisputable clauses of the Covenant concluded between Yahweh and His People. These brief principles emanate from the One Who is by essence, the AMEN, the stable, Firm One - above all else, such precepts are "sure", worthy of the utmost faith. The root of the AMEN seems to be the word that would indicate the pillars, that would render the Temple very solid: the parallel to this physical structure of support for the edifice of the Temple [mentioned in 2 K 18:16] - are those stakes: the parallel to this physical structure of support for the edifice of the Temple [mentioned in 2 K 18:16] - are those stakes driven deep into the desert sands, that gave solidity to the flimsy Bedouin tents during the storms of the desert:

...[The Liturgical **Torah** ...all of the accessories of general use in the Dwelling [the desert tent for worship], all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, must be cast in bronze... [cf. Ex 27:19; 35:18; 38:31].

... The Merarites were in charge of the framework of the Dwelling, with its crossbars, poles, sockets, and all its accessories and fittings, and also the poles round the court, with their sockets, pegs and cords... [cf. Nb 3: 37, f; 4:32].

2.] From this comparison with the Temple pillars - or the tent pegs for the rigors of desert life, one would understand the "Precepts" as solemn edicts: it is in these precepts, and in their observance that one can absolutely trust, be sure - that by keeping them all, one will find happiness, blessedness.

3.] The person of good faith, the "simple" of heart in this biblical sense, is the one to whom all this is addressed. This is the person of biblical "poverty" who lives the spirit of this value, is described in the following passages:

...I thank You, Yahweh, with my whole heart, I recount all Your wonders... I rejoice and delight in You, I sing to Your Name, Most High... [cf. Ps 9-10, passim].

...I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise continually on my lips. I will praise the Lord from my heart, let the humble hear and rejoice... A pauper calls out, and Yahweh hears... Fear Yahweh, you His holy ones - those who fear Him, lack for nothing... [cf. Ps 34].

4.] These 'Poor', the **anawim**, are those who live spiritual childhood:

...I hold myself in quiet ad silence, like a little child in its mother's arms... my heart is not haughty, I do not set my sights too high... [Ps 131].

5.] This is a person who commits him/herself to God totally: in one word, this is the biblical just: these are the simple:

... As your world unfolds, it gives light, and even the simple understand... [c. Ps 119:130].

...Wisdom calls aloud in the streets... you simple people, how much longer will you cling to your simple ways... [cf. Pr 1:20].

... My child, keep My words, and treasure My precepts... say to Wisdom: You are my sister... I saw among the callow lads, I noticed one who had no sense... [cf. Pr 7:7].

...leave foolishness behind and you will live, go forward in the way of perception... [cf. Pr 9:6].

... strike a cynic and simpletons will be more wary; reprove the intelligent and he will understand your meaning... [cf. Pr 19:25].

...When a cynic is punished, simpletons grow wiser, butt someone of understanding acquires knowledge by instruction... [cf. Pr 21:11].

6.] The simple of heart are the poor in spirit - these are the “hope” of the OT religionists:

...Keep these precepts and customs, put them into practice, and other people will admire your wisdom and prudence... [cf. Dt 4:6, ff.].

7.] The NT echo:

...I bless You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever, and for revealing them to little children... [cf. Mt 11:25].

...For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on show right at the end, like men condemned to death: we have been exhibited as a spectacle to the whole universe, both angelic and human. Here we are, fools for Christ's sake, while you are the clever ones in Christ; we are weak, while you are strong; you are honored, while we are disgraced... when we are cursed, we answer with a blessing; when we are hounded, we endure it passively; when we are insulted, we give a courteous answer. we are treated even now as the dregs of this world, the very lowest scum... [cf. I Co 4:9-13]

....[the true wisdom distinguished from the false] . [cf. 1 Co 11: 17-3:4]

...these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt from human philosophy, but in terms learnt from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things... The natural person has no room for the gifts of God's spirit; to Him, they are folly, because their value can only be assessed in the Spirit. The spiritual person, on the other hand, can assess the value of a thing, and his own value cannot be assessed by anyone else...

2. **Honest Joy, Pure Light:** v. 8: ...The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes...

a. The “precepts” are those injunctions, duly imposed - and “decree”, a point which is the object of a categorical ordinance. These words would have in mind those rules that have already been promulgated. These would have their juridical effect and the magistrate would guarantee their application and observance:

... For the precept is a lamp, the teaching is a light, correction and discipline are the way to life... [cf. Pr 6:23].

.. Contempt for the word is self-destructive, respect for the commandment wins salvation.. [cf. Pr 13:13].

b. Within the Laws of Yahweh, such “rules” are:

- on the one hand, so much in conformity with human nature that each finds, in being conformed to them, one's full satisfaction;
- and, on the other hand, they are so clear that the believer sees immediately how to conduct oneself in order to avoid every fault.

c. These ideals are dear to the Wisdom tradition:

...Look down, answer me, Yahweh my God! Give light to my eyes, or I shall fall into the sleep of death... [cf. Ps 13:4].

... Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path... [cf. Ps 119:105].

d. The NT echo might be:

...No one lights a lamp and puts it in some hidden place, or under a tub; they put it on a lamp-stand, so that people may see the light when they come in. The lamp of the body is the eye. When your eye is clear, your whole body, too, is filled with light; but when it is diseased, your body, too, will be darkened. See to it, then, that the light inside you is not darkness. if, therefore, your whole body is filled with light, and not darkened at all, it will be light entirely, as when the lamp shines on you with all its rays... [cf. Lk 11:33-36].

3. Pure, Ever-lasting Oracle: v. 9 ab: "...The fear [i.e., the Oracle] of the Lord is pure, lasting forever..."

a. This word includes the idea of promise within the fundamental notion of the divine declaration. All of the oracles of the Lord are absolutely without any falsity, or admixture of error. As such, they never deceive. They accomplish their goals when they are observed. They are immutable and never deceptive in the slightest manner.

b. The Jerusalem Bible with other Mss, reads here: "the Fear of Yahweh": which seems erroneous. Be that as it may, this reading of "fear" led many of the Fathers of the Church to offer their own dissertations on the distinction that needs to be made between this Fear of God animated by Love [this is a Gift of the Holy Spirit, which disposes a believer to flee from all that would interfere with union with God] - and that fear that is simply servile, which is possessed also by demons, by the condemned. This is fear with Charity, as St. Augustine explains: in this, one would fear simply because he/she is in the presence of the Holy. Fear in this sense is the dread of ever being separated even temporarily from the Beloved [cf. Sts. Ambrose & Augustine].

4. His Judgments, Universally True: v. 9c: "... the judgments of Yahweh are true, upright, every one...:

a. These would be comparable to "sentences: from a Judge. The LAW generally provides sanctions, and requires the pronouncement of verdicts: these would either be benefits, or chastisements. the sanctions of God are always the expression of a veritable, authentic justice. Such divine sanctions either reward, or punish one, in accord with the real merits, or demerits of each person:

.. Faithful love brings its own reward, the inflexible injure their own selves... [cf. Pr 11:18].

b. In this connection, there is the well known wisdom of Daniel:

... May You be blessed and revered,, Lord, the God of our ancestors, may Your Name be held glorious forever... For You are upright in all that You have done for us, all Your deeds are true, all Your ways right, all Your judgments true. True is the sentence You have given in all that you have brought down on us... for You have treated us rightly and truly, as our sins deserve... [cf. Dn 3: 26, ff.] [This is from a section of Daniel preserved only in the Greek and Syriac versions from an original Aramaic].

5. The Finest God, the Freshest Honey: v. 10: "...more desirable than gold, even than the finest gold; His words are sweeter than honey, that drips from the comb..."

a. The divine "words" here imply a clear designation of one's will, with a rather radical significance: these are decisions, words that have been inscribed, recorded, that designate a decision that has already been taken. These would be words written in stone, or written in such a medium that the permanence of the Word would be absurd. These would be those special "words", oracles, declared by God, and transmitted by a servant of God, as by a Prophet. The sacred decisions of God, His Holy Will, have been consigned to stability by their inclusion in the LAW. These words thus preserved will procure for anyone who confirms his/her life to the **Torah** a good that will surpass the most desirable and agreeable goods of this world. Such words constitute a unique treasure, worthy of the studious research of a person. For the 'faithful', those who persevere, in loving obedience to Him, the Lord has promised a happiness that will never be taken away, or deceive one:

.. So, I love your commandments, more than gold, purest gold...[cf. Ps 119:127].

... Gaining wisdom is more rewarding than silver, her yield is more rewarding than gold... [cf. Pr 3:14, ff.]

... Accept my discipline rather than silver, and knowledge of me is preferable to the finest gold... [cf. Pr 8:10] ...the fruit that I give is better than gold, even the finest, the return I make is better than pure silver... [v. 19].

... Kindly words are a honeycomb, sweet to the taste, wholesome to the body... [cf. Pr 16:24].

... Eat honey, my child, since it is good; honey that drips from the comb is sweet to the taste... [cf. Pr 24:13]... and so, for sure, will wisdom be to your soul: find it, and you will have a future, and your hope will not be cut short...

... He then said: Son of Man, eat what you see: eat this scroll, then go and speak to the House of Israel. I opened my mouth; he gave me the scroll to eat and then said: Son of Man, feed on this scroll which I am going to give you and eat your fill. So, I ate it, and it tasted sweet as honey... [cf. Ezk 3:1, ff.].

“Neither gold nor glass compares with wisdom - for her, a vase of fine gold would not be an exchange... [cf. Jb 28:17].

... My Beloved is fresh and ruddy, to be known among ten thousand. His head is golden, purest gold... [cf. Sgs 5:10].

b. In order to appreciate the ore the inestimable gift of what Divine Wisdom is, Jb 28 will judge it superior to all that nature offers as the most precious and extraordinary treasure. History informs us that from the IIIrd Millenium b.C.e., Egypt mined gold - in the founding process, they would use rain water also. There is a papyrus from the 13th century b.C. e. that speaks of a very active gold mine in the desert, to the east of the Nile.

c. For some reason, St. Augustine was particularly impressed with the taste of honey [sweet tooth??!!!]. He points out somewhat facetiously that this biblical comparison between the LAW and honey must presuppose very good [moral] health - because honey is not all that delectable to one with a fever, or infection. To experience its sweetness, one must be enjoying good health. St. Jerome is more exalted in his approach - he felt that the sweetest experience for a believer would be to know Divine Providence, to penetrate its secrets, to contemplate the thought of the Creator, to take instruction from the Discourses of the Lord, which are so full of spiritual wisdom for all. Let others possess riches, he states, but let our sweetness be to meditate on the Law of God, day and night [Letter 30 to Paula]. And, of course, it is necessary to think of St. Bernard, **Doctor Mellifluous!** In his often quoted Hymn to the Holy Name of Jesus, he writes:

O Jesus, sweet to the memory
 Giving true joys to the heart -
 His presence is so sweet,
 Beyond honey, and all else.

Nothing more soothing is chanted
 Nothing more joyful can be heard -
 Nothing sweeter is thought of,
 Than Jesus, the Son of God.

d. A NT echo:

...I am continually thanking God about you, for the grace of God which you have been given in Christ Jesus; in Him, you have been richly endowed in every kind of utterance and knowledge; so firmly has witness to Christ taken root in you. And so, you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; He will continue giving you strength till the very end... You can rely on God, Who has called you to be partners with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord... [cf. 1 Co 1:4-9].

e. This ***koinonia*** with Jesus Christ is translated as communion, or being partners with - has a variety of meanings, underlying a variety of usages. It is a sharing of possessions. This would not mean spiritual blessings only that are to be shared - [cf. Rm 15:26, f.; 2 Co 8:4; 9:13; Ga 3:6; Ph 4:15-17] - all must be united in actions and concerns [cf. 2 Co 1:7; 6:14; 2 Jn 9; Rv 1:9]. The communion from which all others derive is the partnership of grace from God [cf. 1 Co 9:23; Ph 1:5; Phm 6]. This unites to the Most Holy Trinity [cf. 1 Co 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3, 7 +] - to the Father and His Son - to Christ [cf. 1 Co 10:16; Ph 3:10; 1 P 4:13] - to the Holy Spirit [cf. 2 Co 13:13; Ph 2:1]. Because Christ is our partner in human nature [cf. 2 P 1:4 +] we are His sharers in the divine nature. The word becomes characteristic of the Christian community [cf. Ac 2:42, ff.].

... Though I command languages, both human and angelic - if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming, or a cymbal clashing. And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries, and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains - if I am without love, I am nothing. though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned - if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever... [cf. 1 Co 13:1-3].

... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control; no law can touch such things as these. All who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with all its passions and its desires... [cf. Ga 5:22, ff.].

6. A Humble resolve after Meditating on the Law

a. Reflection: v. 11: "... Thus Your servant is formed by Your words, precepts, observing them brings great reward.

1.] In these words, the unknown Psalmist has made his meditation, comparing the **Torah** to the bright sun, warm, enlightening every aspect of creation, human life. From this meditation this pious believer is more convinced than ever of the excellence of the divine Law, and the advantages that result to anyone who will live it. The resolution to be drawn from this is to observe it better in all its points:

...The reward of humility is fear of the Lord, and riches, honor and life... [cf. Pr 22:4].

...Train yourself for religion. Physical exercise is useful enough, but the usefulness of religion is unlimited, since it holds out promise both for life here and now for the life to come ... mean that the point of all our toiling and battling is that we have put our trust in the living God and He is the Savior of the whole human race but particularly all believers. This is what you are to instruct and teach... [cf. 1 Tm 4:8, ff.].

... Religion, of course, does bring large profits, but only to those who are content with what they have. we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it... [cf. 1 Tm 6:6].

2.] Happiness depends, for a believer, on the living of the New Covenant - the reward is great, observes St. Augustine, and the sweetness [peace of mind] that derives from this is without equal. Here is the heart of NT morality and the theme of so many other Palms [cf. Pss 15; 24; 34; 112; 119; 131]. The Gospel of Jesus Christ will simply confirm this - only with the NT, there is no more promises of earthly recompense that the "D" tradition perhaps inspired for the exact observance of the **Torah**. Christ will emphasize the benefits to be derived after this life:

... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heave; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you... [cf. Mt 5:12].

3.] One of the features of this particular verse is that we have for the first time, the religious title of a believer, that of the **SERVANT OF YAHWEH** - this is found again in v. 13: "...and from pride, preserve Your servant..." This will become most frequent throughout the Psalter, after this first mention here:

...[Peter's address to the People] ...It is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, Who has glorified His SERVANT ... Jesus, Whom you handed over...

[cf. Ac 13:13]..It is for you in the first place that God raised up His SERVANT and sent Him to bless you, as every one of you turns from his wicked ways... [cf. v. 26].

... This is what has come true: in this very city, Herod and Pontius Pilate planned together with the gentile nations and the peoples of Israel, against your Holy SERVANT, Jesus, Whom You anointed, to bring about the very thing that in Your strength and wisdom had predetermined should happen... And now, Lord, take note of their threats and help Your SERVANTS to proclaim Your message with all fearlessness, by stretching out Your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of Your holy SERVANT, Jesus... [cf. Ac 4:27-30].

4.] This title implies less the idea of servitude, but much more that of belonging, that flows from a free choice, and election. This biblical service results far more from the appeal to enter into a fervent relationship with God - a freely chosen "constraint" to render Him service, in prayer and mission:

...and we, Your people, the flock that you pasture, will thank you forever, will recite Your praises from age unto age.. [cf. Ps 79:2].

...I take to hear the taunts of the nations... leveled at the foot steps of Your anointed! Blessed be Yahweh for ever... [cf. Ps 79:50]

...'Our redeemer' is Your name from of old. Why, Yahweh, do you let us wander from Your ways ad let our hearts grow too hard for us to fear You? return, for the sake of Your SERVANTS, the tribes of Your heritage... [cf. Is 63:17, ff.]

b. To be a SERVANT OF GOD is a privilege granted to anyone who would agree to accept a Mission of the religious order in the world - that of knowing, experiencing Yahweh, of loving Him, of being attached to Him and to His "service", of committing oneself to worship Him, to practice the moral code that He has revealed, and to give witness in each occasion of the holiness He requests of His SERVANTS. There is no other single title that would subsume under itself all of these privileges that flow from being the Chosen Servant of Yahweh.

c. In the OT, the following were the SERVANTS OF GOD:

1.] **The Patriarchs:**

... from there Isaac went up to Bersheba/ Yahweh appeared to him the same night, and said: 'I am the God of your father, Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I shall bless you and multiply your off-spring for my SERVANT, Abraham's ask.. [cf. Gn 26:24].

... Remember Your SERVANTS, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom You swore by Your very Self and made the promise.. [cf. Ex 32:13], f.]

... [Moses stands in the breach].. Remember Your SERVANTS, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; take no notice of this people's stubbornness, their wickedness, their sin... [cf. Dt 9:27, ff.].

... The wonderful history of Israel]... Stock of Abraham, his SERVANT, children of Jacob whom He chose... His judgments touch the whole world... Faithful to His sacred promise, given to His SERVANT, Abraham, He led His people out with dancing, His chosen ones with shouts of joy... [cf. Ps 105:6, 41].

2.] Moses:

...When Israel saw the mighty deed that Yahweh had performed... , the people revered Yahweh and put their faith in Moses, His SERVANT...[cf. Ex 14:3 - followed by the son of the sea].

...Listen to My words! If there is a prophet among you, I reveal Myself to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with My SERVANT Moses; to him My whole household is entrusted; to him I speak face to face, plainly and not in riddles, and he sees Yahweh's form. How, then, could you dare to criticize My SERVANT, Moses... [cf. Nb 12:6-8].

...I then pleaded with Yahweh: 'My Lord, Yahweh', I said, 'now that You have begun to reveal Your greatness and Your power to Your SERVANT with works and mighty deeds, no god in heaven or on earth can rival... [cf. Dt 3:24].

...There is the country of Moab, Moses, SERVANT of Yahweh, died as Yahweh decreed... [cf. Dt 34:5].

3.] The Kings, especially David - also the Prophets:

... Elijah said the prophet stepped forward. Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', he said, 'Let them know today that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your SERVANT, that I have done all these things at Your command... [cf. 1 K 18:36]

...I shall avenge the blood of My SERVANTS, the Prophets, and all of Yahweh's SERVANTS... [cf. 2 K 9:7].

... Turn from your wicked ways and keep My commandments and laws in accordance with the entire Law which I laid down for your fathers and delivered to them through My SERVANTS, the Prophets... [cf. 2 K 17:13].

...From the day your ancestors left the land of slavery until TODAY, I have sent you all My SERVANTS, the prophets, persistently sending them day after day... [cf. Jr 7:25].

...Yahweh says this: If you will not listen to Me and follow My Law which I have given to you, and pay attention to the words of My SERVANTS, the prophets, whom I have never tired of sending to you, although you have never paid attention... [cf. Jr 26:5].

...It was of you that I spoke in the past through My SERVANTS, the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days, foretelling your invasion...[cf. Exk 38:17].

...Lord Yahweh does nothing without revealing His secret to His SERVANTS, the prophets... [cf. Am 3:7].

...But did not My words and statutes, with which I charged My SERVANTS, the prophets, overtake your ancestors just the same...? [cf. Zc 1:6.].

d. Then, all the Faithful who believe and trust in YAhweh, became His imitators, emulators of these exceptional personalities - thus, Israel is called the SERVANT PEOPLE OF GOD.

7. NEED FOR PURIFICATION: v. 12: "... But who can detect his own failings? wash away my hidden faults!"

a. As is well known, the Divine LAW has numerous articles -- embracing all the circumstances of the human existence, even the most insignificant. Hence, there could be no human act, no thought that could ever escape the watchful eye of the **Torah**. No one would ever be out from underneath its directives. With the eventual coming of Pharisaism, these articles of the Law would become enormously complicated. This would induce St. Paul to speak about the "yoke of servitude":... *Christ set us free, so that we should remain free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be fastened again to 'the yoke of slavery'...*, [cf. Ga 5:1].

b. In his desire not to be displeasing in anything to the Lord, he is inspired to accuse himself even of all his foibles due to his inherent weakness - even those of inadvertence! There is some biblical background to all this:

.... [The Book of Numbers has a whole section on expiation for faults of inadvertence: cf. Nb 15:22-31].

... If anyone sins inadvertently... if the whole community of Israel has sinned inadvertently.... when a leader has sinned and inadvertently incurred guilt by doing something forbidden... [cf. Lv 4:2, 13, 22, 27]...or one of the country-people...

...Therefore, Lord, remember me, look on me. Do not punish me for my sins, or for my needless faults... [cf. Tb 3:3].

...Hold not my youthful sins against me, but remember me as your faithful love dictates... [cf. Ps 25:6, ff.].

...Who will lay whips to my thoughts ... to be merciless to my errors... for fear they should multiply... [cf. Si 23:3].

c. In the delicacy of this conscience, everything counts, and nothing is negligible. In stricter times, some kind of expiation was required for 'inadvertence.' The Rabbinic tradition remained somewhat severe in regard to inadvertent sins - in this view, it represented a sign of negligence that could have most serious consequences. In reality, in this view, consistent negligence would at last open the door eventually to intentional sins.

d. The saints of Christianity offered a different view - the Little Flower is recorded to have stated to one of her companions concerning the latter's fear of losing grace because of daily infidelities - St. Therese of the Child Jesus responded in such a way that it indicates the admirable depths of her infused knowledge of the Goodness of God. She is recorded to have stated that the Good God is so full of mercy, He would not let her lose grace - it is He, rather, who pours out His love, nothing the good will of the good Sister.

8. Prayer for Humility and to Avoid sin: v. 13: "...And from pride, preserve Your SERVANT, never let it be my master... So shall I be above reproach, free from grave sin..."

a. This Psalmist, like so many others, had a very clear sense of his own inner instability and sinfulness:

...remember, I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of my conception... [cf. Ps 51:5].

...God does not treat us as our sins deserve, nor repay us as befits our offenses... [cf. Ps 103:10].

b. By his appeal, the Psalmist is begging for divine assistance, which would keep him from any and every willful violation of the Law. He does not want any open rebellion in his life, any insolence. He prays for deliverance of any fault as foreseen in the Book of Numbers:

...But, the individual who acts deliberately, be he citizen or alien, commits an outrage against Yahweh, such a man will be outlawed from his people. Since he has treated God's word with contempt and has disobeyed his order, such a man will be outlawed absolutely and will bear the consequences of his guilt... [cf. Nb 15:30, ff.].

c. He asks to be kept from any act of pride:

...There are six things that Yahweh hates, seven that He abhors: a haughty look, a lying tongue - hands that shed innocent blood., a heart that weaves wicked plots, feet that hurry to do evil, a false witness who lies with every breath, and one who sows dissension among his brothers... [cf. Pr 6:16-19].

...Endlessly the arrogant have jeered at me, but I have not veered from Your LAW... The arrogant blacken me with lies, though I whole-heartedly observe Your precepts... Let the arrogant who tell lies against me be shamed while I ponder Your precepts... Guarantee the well-being of Your SERVANT, do not let the proud oppress me... [cf. Ps 119:51, 69, 78, 122].

...That will be a day of Yahweh Sabaoth, for all who are majestic and haughty, for all who are proud and brought low, for all the cedars of Lebanon, high and proud, for the oaks of Bashan...[cf. Is 2:12]...Human pride will be humbled, human arrogance brought low, and Yahweh alone will be exalted on that day... [v. 17].

... We have heard about Moab's pride, about how proud it is, about its arrogance, its pride, its rage, its bravado, which will come to nothing... [cf. Is 16:6].

...If you do not listen to this warning, I shall weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and stream with tears, for Yahweh's flocks being led to captivity... [cf. Jr 13:17].

...Now is the day, your turn has come, it has come, it appears, the sceptre has blossomed, pride is at its peak... [cf. Ezk 7:10].

...Yahweh says this: 'The support of Egypt will fall; the pride of her strength will crumble; they will fall by the sword from Migdol to Syene - declares the Lord Yahweh... [cf. Ezk 30:6]... At Taphnes, day will turn to darkness when shatter the scepters of Egypt there, when the pride of her strength ceases.... [cf. v. 18].

...Like a captive partridge in a cage, so is the heart of the proud: like a spy he watches for your downfall... [cf. Si 11:30].

d. The pious Psalmist truly dreads to sin willingly - he notes this in his basic inclinations. He does not want to be definitively rejected by Yahweh. He knows that he cannot preserve himself on his own, so, he has recourse to prayer so that the victorious assistance of God will be heaped upon him: he asks both to know the will of God, and the ability, capacity to live it, perhaps in harmony with this verse:
... Let your face shine upon Your SERVANT ... teach me Your will... [cf. Ps 119:135].

e. So, this pious Psalmist is a great admirer of the Creator of the Universe: and as He placed order in the stars, night and day, He also has placed the "sun", the **TORAH**, to regulate human actions. The sun and the moon never waver from the order that has been given to them by the Creator [cf. I Clement]. Anyone who allows disorder to come into his/her life does not follow the way of the Lord.

9. Final Dedication: Prayer and faith: [v. 14] "... May the words of my mouth always find favor and the whisperings of your heart - in your presence, Yahweh, my rock, my redeemer..."

a. This is a kind of re-statement of the Psalmist's purposes, his re-dedication of himself to God by a profession of his prayer, a faith he recalls in a way, his raises extended to the LAW [cf. vv. 7-10], and his testimony of his personal attachment to this LAW [cf. vv. 11-13]. The Psalmist has just formulated all this in praise of the Lord. In fact, there could be no better proof of one's love than to give to God all these expressions of his deepest sentiments that the Psalmist offers, as well as humbly making known to the Creator of it all his own apprehensions and practical resolutions to live up to this lofty ideal. All of this is an enviable demonstration that there is no help out-side of God. The Psalmist is strengthened in his faith-filled hope and is convinced that in very circumstance he is able to count on the efficacious assistance of the one who is celebrated in this Law. He is sure that he can count on the intervening presence of God in his hour of need:

...Whenever he slaughtered them, they began to seek him, they turned back and looked eagerly for him, recalling that God was their Rock, God the most high Redeemer... [cf. Ps 78: 35].

...Plead my cause and defend me; as you promised, give me life... [cf. Ps 119:154].

...But their Redeemer is strong, He will take up their cause, Yahweh Sabaoth is his Name - He will give our country rest...[cf. Jr 50:34].

... Henceforth I have a Witness in heaven, my Defender is there on high..[cf. Jb 16:19].

... Do not be afraid, Jacob, you worm! You little handful of Israel! I shall help you, declares Yahweh; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel... [cf. Is 41:14].

... Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.. I shall knock down all the prison bars... [cf. Is 43:14].

... Thus says Yahweh, Israel's King, Yahweh Sabaoth his Redeemer: I am the First and Last, there is no god except Me... Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, He who formed you in the womb: I, Yahweh, have made all things, I alone spread out the heavens... [cf. Is 44:6, 24].

... Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, to the one who is despised, detested by the nation, to the slave of despots: kings will stand up when they see Me, princes will see and bow low, because of Yahweh, Who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, Who has chosen you... [cf. Is 49:7].

... Then for Zion will come a Redeemer, for those who stop rebelling in Jacob declares Yahweh... [cf. Is 59:20].

b. This notion of God standing up in defense of His faithful ones comes, of course, from the idea of the **GO'EL**, the Defender, the Protector, the One Who guarantees the group, or some individual. For anyone of His "faithful", who is undergoing some danger, the 'jealousy' of God then turns from punishing His own for their evil ways - to defending them, when the instruments God handles the interests of the **Anawim**, and assures them of salvation. He ransoms the unfortunate! In this way, God as **GO'EL**, His own special treasure. God will reintegrate anyone who has suffered run at the hands of the Tempter.

c. This Psalmist, then, offers us the invaluable lesson that all may count in all humility on the divine support. One can turn to the Redeemer in humility and ask to be kept from all deficiency. For this Psalmist, prayer is elevated to the level of Sacrifice:

... Sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a broken, contrite heart, God will never scorn...
[cf. Ps 51: 16, ff.]

10. Christian Orientation:

a. The Psalmist is literally astonished at the wonderful, created order established by God. He ponders the immensity of this world of ours, gravitating around the sun. Far from being isolated, the universe is set up in extraordinary, wondrous harmony. The scientist Kepler concluded his book, on The Cosmic Harmony by offering his thanks to God, He was grateful that the Creator had allowed him to witness the beauty of the universe, all of it the work of His hands. Kepler felt that he personally had just been called to make better known the wonders of the created sky - but, yet realized how limited was the view he offered, even though it is universally recognized as "brilliant".

1.] The theologian, Karl Barth, echoes these insights of the great scientist: God has bestowed such language on His creation that it cannot help but bespeak the glories of the Creator.

[2] Poets add their own insights: in a way, the eye contemplates the firmament in vain - without seeing God, a believer can surely contemplate His specially beautiful Temple. Paul Claudel noted that all the cosmos is much like a text, a script. It speaks to us day and night, humbly and joyfully, of the absence - and yet, the simultaneous. Other, the transcendent Creator of it all.

b. This is a glimpse of the magnificent lesson offered eternally to be believing world through Ps 19. All are invited to contemplate unceasingly the wonders of the creation much like a “natural” revelation. One may note in the created cosmos, as in Revelation, the Creator of the world, the Author of the superior world of grace. From this contemplation, one might then be inspired to be motivated the more by the wonders of the faith - to live in hope to practice charity. While we pray that the light, warmth of the sun might never be extinguished, we pray also to allow the light of God’s Law to shine in our hearts, to be a lamp for our feet.

c. Believers for centuries have found the Divine LAW a Light for direction - but also a force, an energy, a sweetness, a caressing and not only a yoke. By observance of the **Torah**, for centuries those who have complied, have enjoyed communion with the Law-giver. By keeping the LAW, Christians may experience the thoughts, the designs, the desires of their God. To this LAW, they are invited to open up, to hand over their minds, hearts and lives to God. In this LAW, disciples learn docility, their wills come to collaborate, and their hearts return to that spiritual childhood, essential to enter into the Kingdom of God. This Psalm would teach us that our faith is more precious than gold, and living it is sweeter than honey. The lived faith is both a personal and social force, acknowledge beyond comparison and vivifying nourishment.

d. The Lord Himself reminds us:

...You must, therefore, set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to His ... I say this to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you: so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for He causes His sun to rise on the bad as well as on the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright as well as on the wicked alike... [c. Mt 5:45, 48]

...Come to Me, all you who labor and are over-burdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder My yoke and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, My yoke is easy and My burden is light... [cf. Mt 11:29].

e. Retreat Masters have suggested that in order to draw even more benefit from this work of art it would be helpful, with Bible in hand, out in the country, on a beautiful day, to ponder the sunrise of a new day. The appeal is to take some time to smell the flowers, to watch the sunrise, and to ponder the word of God - to observe the elements as would a shepherd, or a farmer, but with religious purposes in mind. Perhaps it would be better just to let nature ‘speak’, and to adore the Creator in nature, and in the inspired word.

f. Blaise Pascal was piqued by the two infinities: God and our nothingness. Human beings would do well to contemplate nature herself in her sublime and full majesty. The sun could be seen much like an eternal lamp that has been created to shed light on the universe. The earth is simply a magnificent creation that this brilliant light describes with shadow and light. Then, note the brilliant stars at night, in all their mystery, beauty. It has been noted that sometimes non-believers have noted more about the earth's beauty than Christians - giving or heed to the beauties of the created world enables one to be more human.

g. From the perspective of faith, it is a great loss to consider the wonderful universe no longer as a 'creation.' For the faithful, the universe, the cosmos are an outstanding, brilliant testimony of the grandeur of the Creator. It is noted in divine revelations that the Eternal Word has chosen "to set up His Tent" among men and women [cf. Jn 1:1, ff.]. Jesus Christ is simply the Incarnate Power and Will of God [cf. 1 Co 1:24] - He is the pure emanation of the father's glory [cf. Heb 1:3]. Jesus Christ is the re-capitulation of the redemptive plan of the Father [cf. Col 1:15-18; Ep 2:11-22].

h. It might be said that the essence of Christianity is the belief in the unification of the entire universe in God through the Incarnation. For, it is through the Incarnation that God has descended in nature to animate, and lead all back to Himself. In this, one should not stop with any abstract reflection on the wonders of Jesus Christ, but should also be attracted to Him by the cosmic symbols of Him. The Light from the East would never intend that we block out the sunrise each day on the eastern horizon. God offers both these lights complementarily, harmoniously - these are the two hierarchical, inseparable hierophanies: the cosmic light of creation and the Eternal Light, Jesus Christ.

i. Reflection on Nature can also be one of the ways that we come to fathom the mystery of the divine will:

...That is why, ever since the day He told us, we have never failed to remember you in our prayers and ask that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of His will, and so be able to lead a life worthy of the Lord, a life acceptable to Him in all its aspects, bearing fruit in every kind of good work, and growing in knowledge of the Lord, fortified in accordance with His glorious strength, with all power always to persevere and to endure, giving thanks with joy to them to inherit the light... [cf. Col 1:9-12].

11. Liturgical Use:

verse 4: Applied to preachers in the Church[cf. Rm 10:18]

verse 9: found in Rv 16:7; 19:2.

Used for Apostles, the Nativity, during Confirmation.

The Psalm is part of Matins on the Feast of the Lord: the Trinity; Christmas, January 1; Most Holy Name, the Ascension, the Sacred Heart.

It is used for the BVM, the Apostles, the Angels, Virgins and Holy Women.

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PART TWO
THE APOSTOLIC MISSION
[cf. C. StuhlmueLLer, CP and D. Senior, CP]

I. According to St. Matthew 28:19
..euntes docete...
“... Make disciples of all Nations...”

Presentation:

This is Mt’s Universal Apostolic Mission - there is further a Mission Discourse in Mt [c. 10] - which indicates the prime concern of Mt’s theology.

1. Context:

a. Matthaeian scholars show much agreement regarding the shaping of this gospel than in any of the others. There was a Jewish revolt [66-73 C. E.] with a resulting transformation of both Judaism and Christianity. Hence, many feel that Mt writes in the decades of the 80’s and 90’s, probably in Syria.

1.] For the Jews the revolt was a shattering experience - leading to the destruction of the Holy City and the temple around 70, The Sadducce party was no longer important, as it has based in the Temple. Radical groups [as the Essenes, the Zealots] were either obliterated, or badly crippled. The Pharisees had the moral stamina to survive - they attempted to re-build Judaism on their own strict interpretation of the Law. Their efforts led to Rabbinic Judaism.

2.] This post revolt time led to much less tolerance for fringe groups. Christians were lumped together with apocalyptic groups as “dangerous”, dilution to Jewish orthodoxy - and were considered a threat. These groups were expelled from the synagogue in the last 25 years of the 1st century.

3.] With Christianity, this social-political situation brought about certain basic shifts. Earlier Christian and Jewish groups had been in contact - adhering to Jewish Law and the religious life centered around the Temple and Synagogue. The seeds of further separation were growing rapidly:

- views concerning the Person of Jesus;
- interpretation of some parts of the Law;
- attention to the Gentiles.

Sporadic hostility and much tension became the spirit of the times [cf. the murder, martyrdom of Stephen - Ac 7]. The destruction of the Holy City led to a stricter

orthodoxy under the leadership of the Pharisees. This deeply affected also the identifying consciousness within Christianity. The rift continued to expand - expulsion from the Synagogue created a crisis of identity for the Christians who had come over from Judaism. The destruction of the Holy City favored the shift from Judaism, and favored Christianity. The struggle among the expanding community of Jewish Christians was also on how to maintain their identity in an increasingly Gentile membership and culture.

b. Mt seems to have written his Gospel for this transitional group. He himself seems to have been Jewish, as the Gospel is so sensitive to interpretations of the ***Torah***, the teaching authority of the rabbis, the OT promises, and the minutiae of Jewish life. The hostility that permeates some of Mt's material [e.g., c. 23] reflects the friction between the Christians and the Pharisees in the times after the year 70.

c. Mt's audience, though, was not Jewish but rather a mixed population. For the Jewish members, he wanted to emphasize the fact that Jesus' own mission was not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to bring them to fulfillment [cf. Mt 5:17]. Christianity was not hostile to Judaism, but its God-intended fulfillment. Yet, for both Jewish and Gentile believers Mt sought to place the universal Apostolic Mission in perspective. this is all God's plan, already noted in the OT and in Jesus' words and deeds. Despite the tension of this mission, the very nature of the mission handed on by Jesus was to teach all nations. Mt exercised a kind of ministry of continuity, in a time of great change. The catalyst for all this was the shift of the Gospel from Israel to the nations - hence, the mission challenge is the heart of this gospel.

d. The identity of Jesus and the scope of His Mission were the basic points of tension between the Synagogue and the Church - the ultimate catalyst for the Church's shift toward the Gentiles. Hence, the Gospel is radically Christological. Jesus' Person and Plan is the focal point is the point of continuity which simultaneously pens up new horizons for the future. The centrality of the Christological concentration and the mission question explains the emphasis on the Jewish rejection of Jesus. each one's response to Jesus and his message becomes paradigmatic for all salvation history.

e. Mt's efforts to reach two moments of religious consciousness may explain apparent conflict in the traditions he hands on The Law has enduring validity -

- yet, important requirements are eliminated. [cf. 5:17-48];
- Jewish authorities are both respected, and given scathing criticism [cf. 23:2-3];

- at one stage, the Apostles restrict the mission to Israel - and then are sent to all nations [cf. 10:5; 28:19].

2. Elements of Mt's Mission Theology

a. Mt's dependence on Mk: there are some points of contact:

1.] Both evangelists adopted the "Gospel" genre to communicate the message on **the person and mission of Jesus**. This is the nature of the Christian message - this an inherently, on-going, infectious message of salvation that passes through all times and cultures. Mt has had access to additional "sayings" material [cf. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25] and shapes these as "discourses." Jesus moves in to Galilee [cf. 4:12-17] to inaugurate the Kingdom ministry and press home His message of proclamation, teaching and healing. As in Mk, at Caesarea Philippi the story tends toward the climax in the first passion prediction [cf. 16:13-28]. The story comes to a climax with Palm Sunday preparations [cf. 21:1, ff.] - confrontation in the Temple [cf. 21-25] - the Passion and resurrection [26:28-15]. Mt stretches both the beginning and the end of the gospel:

- the infancy narratives push Jesus deep into Israel's past [cf. 1-2], all the way to the beginnings of human history;
- the conclusion is also more developed: Mk ends with a promise of reunion in Galilee [cf. Mk 16:7,f.] - while Mt offers appearances in Jerusalem [cf. 28:9, f, and Galilee [28:16-20];
- there is a final promise of an abiding presence [cf. 28:20].

This is a dynamic story, destined for ongoing communication.

2.] Mt's fidelity to Mk's Mission Theology includes both content and form. Mt, following Mk, interprets the ministry of Jesus under the concept of "**the Kingdom of God**", or "of heaven", "heaven" - a reverential euphemism for "God", reflecting the Jewish sensitivity to the Name of God. This symbol is found throughout, and provides a comprehensive manner of understanding the scope and meaning of Jesus' Mission. Jesus embodies the coming Rule of God: in His piety, preaching, teaching, healing, liberating - His relationships, His very Person. This is the decisive act of salvation promised in the OT and longed for by the People of Israel.

b. Mt.'s Salvation History

1.] Some of the major dimensions of Mt's idea of a continuing Salvation History: the heritage of Judaism, the Jesus-Event, ecclesial experience.

History is “salvific” for a believer, as Mt notes the ongoing divine intervention in even conflicting events which make up the flow of history.

2.] Mt’s is a reflection on the sacred and salvific patterns of general history. Mt gives supreme attention to this perspective, largely due to his constant inter-action with Judaism, and the transitional situation of his own community. There seem to be three major periods in this for Mt:

- from Abraham to John the Baptist;
- the unique time of Jesus’ own life;
- the time of the Church, from the resurrection until the end of the world;

3.] Some of the main characteristics of Mt’s historical framework:

a.] Jesus is the turning point in history - and the Jesus-Event may open with the Precursor. Jesus inaugurates a new period of history. Christ’s risen presence will be sustained until the consummation of the world [cf. Mt 28:20]. There is an inner dynamic within the Gospel story - Jesus’ death and resurrection are the climax of His personal story. this is also the inauguration of the new age.

b.] Along this line is Mt’s description of the moment of Jesus’ death [cf. 27:51-53], which is the opening of the eschatological age. Mt’s description of the death of Jesus tears open the Temple veil [cf. 27:51] - this is judgment on Israel, explained by cosmic events: an earthquake, splitting of rocks, the opening of tombs. These cosmic signs culminate in the resurrection of the “Holy Ones” and their entry into the Holy City [cf. 27:51, ff.]. These awesome “happenings” provoke the faith confession from the centurion: Truly this was the Son of God [cf. 27:54]. These rumblings of nature and the resurrection of the elect are typical signs of the end-time anticipated in Jewish apocalyptic writings.

4.] The empty tomb story, the “angel of the Lord”, the brilliant raiment, the fear of the guards [cf. 28:2, ff.] offer an eschatological significance. The empty tomb means that the long-awaited New Age has dawned:

a.] Jesus inaugurates a new and decisive stage of Salvation History. Mt notes His human origins [cc. 1-2] - His public ministry [cc. 3-4]. Prior to Jesus’ death the old order retained validity - yet, even during His life-time, some signs of the coming age were evident. The goal of all this is Israel, God’s Holy People. Yet, there is something of a baffling restriction of the Mission: *...go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel...* [cf. 10:5]. Jesus was sent to the “lost sheep” [cf. Mt 15:24]

b.] With the Resurrection, the former restrictions no longer oblige. The Law holds only until heaven and earth pass away, until all is accomplished [cf. Mt 5:17] The Church is instructed to obey and teach in the post-resurrection period - NOT the Jewish Law, but the commands of Jesus Christ [cf. 28:16-20]. This is the “fulfilled law” of the new age [cf. 5:17]

c.] This explains the shift from the restricted Mission statements of Mt 10:4 & 15:24. With the Resurrection, God’s work of salvation is directed primarily to Israel. God’s grace is opened to all - thus, “all nations” are to be reached This universal apostolic mission is not some accident - but simply the sublime consequence of all that went before.

d.] This is Mt’s Christology He was convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of ancient Jewish hopes, and so much more beside! The Risen Jesus is now revealed as the natural Son of God, the initiator of this Final Time. His abiding presence will propel the community through the end times. A number of characteristic themes are noted in Mt:

[1] Jesus the Fulfillment of the Promises to Israel:

Jesus has not come to abolish, but to fulfill. this is the “promise-fulfillment” mode: He not only fulfills by obeying, but brings it to the end for which it was intended. Mt casts this aura of “fulfillment” everywhere - the entire OT seems to have been funneled through by Jesus In so many ways, He is the ultimate fulfillment of the OT. His titles are steeped in OT lore: Emmanuel, the Christ, Son of God, Son of David, Son of Man, Servant:

[2] Jesus as Present and Future Hope: the Risen Jesus is the Supreme Animator of the community. He remains present in His Community, in its life, in its Mission - He is the Emmanuel [cf. 1:23]. The miracle stories affirm that the Risen Jesus remains active, in healing, liberating, forgiving: the leper is cleansed [cf. 8:2] - the centurion finds help for his servant [v. 6] - the poor disciples, and the overwhelmed Peter cry out for His help as “Lord”. This already designates the power and the authority of the Risen Jesus. He is the One Who preaches and teaches - the love command is supreme [cf. 7:12; 5:43; 22:34-40]. The search for the Lost Sheep is Jesus’ own mission - the Call of the 12 remains the marching orders of MT’s community [cf. 10:1, ff.]. Any hospitality to the “little ones” is really that shown to Him. This Son of Man will come anew at the end time - the resurrection has indeed triumphed. The Gospel holds out the expectancy of the full consummation of the end and the victorious judgment of Jesus as SON OF MAN. Mt, then, views Jesus in the full spectrum; rooted in Israel’s history, carrying out His Messianic Mission in Galilee

and Judea, present with the community. This faith perspective enables each dimension of the Christ - event.

[3] **Yet, He is Rejected:** Jesus, the embodiment of God's saving acts, the turning point of Salvation History, response to Him is all that matters. Mt gives so much attention to the **response theme**. There is some real complicity of us all in His Paschal Mystery, as well as for us being its beneficiaries. The ultimate response is the **acceptance** of Christianity, the **Church** that He formed under the leadership of the 12, with Peter as the Head over all. The Scribes and Pharisees are no longer the leaders, but the Apostles. The negative response is called **rejection**. There are many challenges to in authentic responses that reverberate all through the Sermon on the Mount. So many dimensions of Jesus' Mission "scandalizes" His enemies: His forgiveness, His out-reach to outcasts; His compassion for His disciples; His exorcisms. Any **comprehensive rejection** of Jesus and His message that leads to the Cross. The Parable of the vineyard manifests the series of prophetic messengers who have been mistreated and rejected by Israel - even the "son" is killed. The allegory is based on Jesus being crucified outside the city. Also the scene of Pilate washing his hands, peculiar to Mt, and then the people accept His blood on themselves. The Church has asked pardon for the unhappy interpretation of some of these texts some believers have made of these texts. The anti-Semitic potential in these texts has not been a happy, or intended turn of events in the Gospel.

e.] Mt's thoughts on "history" provided him with a theological basis for the universal Salvific Mission of Jesus. All the nations on earth are being invited to share in this drama of salvation. The pattern of Jesus' destiny opens up the realization that His is the destiny of all. The outcasts may enter the kingdom first - so many of the "in" crowd would reject Jesus.

f.] The new and unexpected life that is constantly being offered takes the place of bankrupting death Mt's artful genealogy places Jesus solidly in the History of Israel - through Abraham, and the "outsiders" such as: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba. In His public ministry, His interest in these "outsiders" goes on: the tax collectors, sinners, the gentiles who respond in solid faith - this is the paradox of god's way.

g.] The Matthaean was saddened by its inability to extend its Mission among "their own." Thus Mt presents a full-blown Gentile Mission, a Christological review of history.

c. **Response as a Universal Principle:**

1.] There is constant emphasis throughout Mt on the proper response to Jesus Christ. Social, or previous religious background makes no difference. The **sweeping universalism** is inherent in Mt. The proper response to Jesus and His message includes an active faith in Jesus' Person and the transformation of life derived from this faith.

2.] Faith is described as a firm trust in Jesus' power to save [cf. 8:1-13; 9:18-31; 15:21-28]. Implicit here is a recognition of Jesus' true identity and the consequent entrusting of one's life to Him. All else needs to be put aside and commitment to the "following of Christ" becomes the order of the day. This is "faith in action." The disciples, as close as they are to Jesus, are models of "little faith" [cf. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8].

3.] This "faith", however, is also "understanding" - Mk so often notes the disciples' lack of understanding in the revelation of the Messianic Secret. Mt points out that the real disciples DO understand [cf. 16:21]. Mt's emphasis on "understanding" harmonizes with his emphasis on Jesus as teacher. The genuine disciple truly "understands". Hence, a disciple is one who "believes, follows, understands".

4.] "Righteousness", or "justice" connotes Jesus' obedience to His Father's Will. This obedience to the Father's Will now characterizes the true disciple, and to teach others. Each disciple is exhorted to "hear", to "listen" and to "do" the Will of God [cf. 7:24, ff.]. Obedience to the will of the Father "constitutes" Jesus as "Son" ["filial constitution"]. This is the criterion of final judgment - all will be based on this. The ultimate command is to "do all that Jesus has commanded."

5.] Jesus presents a dimension of sin as "failure" to do good deeds - all have access to the Word of God, but do not respond. The "hypocrisy" of leaders is either because of inauthentic action, or the result of brave words but weak deeds. Prophets are "false" not so much on their words, but on their actions. The wicked servant violates the love command [cf. 25:45-48] - the foolish virgins have no oil for their lamps [25:1-13] - and there are those who bury their talents [vv. 14-30] - all fail to act.

6.] The emphasis is on **Apostolic Mission**: Just powerfully ratified the dynamic aspect of ancient faith. Membership in the new community was ultimately determined by "righteousness", an active submission to the will of God. Joseph is a sublime model of such obedience: through dreams God's will is made

known to him [cf. 1:24; 2:13, ff., 20,f.]. This is what establishes the Centurion [8:5, ff.], the Canaanite woman [15:21, ff.], the tax collectors and outcasts [9:9, ff.; 11: 18, ff.; 21: 28, ff.] - all are saved in that they are animated by dynamic faith. The kingdom does not pertain to those who reject Jesus - and it is handed over to the Gentiles who produce fruit in this vineyard [cf. 21:43]. This is Mt's universal criterion. This saving human response has two aspects, "contemplative" and "Apostolic": includes good deeds but also the confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Observe all that Jesus commands - there is something of a battle as to the order of these two dimensions. A usual one is that all flows from the Person of Jesus: confess Him, and as He did. While just to say "Lord, Lord" can never be sufficient - the cup of cold water needs to be given in His Name in order to be eternally effective.

7.] This universality is evident in a number of passages in this gospel: the "world" [cf. 13:36-43] is the impact point of God's word - and "all" will be judged on the basis of deeds at the end of time [cf. vv. 41-43]. All humanity is to be judged on the basis of Christ-like action. The banquet parable [cf. also Lk 14:16, ff.] allegorizes the inclusion of the Gentiles. The invited guests fail to respond to the protocol - then, they experience judgment. The guest list then is expanded to include all, both good and bad [cf. 22:1-10] - but, there are requirements [cf. vv. 11-14].

8.] The emphasis on good deeds seems to flow always from the Confessional framework: Jesus is the Son of God. For many interpreters, with Mt's emphasis on good works, he seems to be the evangelist for the old axiom: whoever does what he/she can, God will never deny the grace.

3. The Apostolic Missionary and Mt's Church: there are two outstanding "Mission" texts [10:1-47; 28:16-20] - these do offer a dynamic thrust to the Gospel and enable the careful reader to note the portrait of the motivation and style of missionary activity in Mt's Church.

a. The Mission Discourse of Mt 10: the "Past" and the Present:

1.] After a summary of Jesus' own mission of preaching, healing, and teaching [cf. 9:35, ff.], Mt notes Jesus' compassion for the "crowds" and the need of a plentiful harvest [cf. 9:36-38] - Jesus' compassion urges the prayer that laborers be sent out into the harvest [cf. 9:38].

a.] The section that follows is c. 10: this is the Commissioning of the 12 [cf. Mk 3:13-19; 6:7-11] with a section of an apocalyptic discourse.

b.] This refers more to the community after Jesus' death - it is ultimate by an exhortation to the on-going mission of His community. The restrictive instruction not to go among the Gentiles is **prior to the death** and resurrection that will issue in a new age period. With the dawn of this new time, it will be thrown open to all nations. Hence, **c. 10** seems to refer to the "**past**" mission. However, there are also elements for the "**current**" mission.

2.] The content of this chapter is a kind of synthesis of Mt's Mission Theology, no matter to which time-frame it pertains: the teaching of this chapter is valid for all missionary activity.

a.] The Apostolic Mission is rooted in a divine call and grace. The disciples of all times, ages, need to pray for laborers to be sent into the harvest. Jesus is God's Agent, the One Who calls the 12, sends them out as Apostolic Missionaries.

b.] The Apostolic Mission is simply that of Jesus - in c. 10, the word "teaching" is missing. Mt reserves this key function until the final commission. At this juncture in this chapter, the Apostles have not yet been exposed to the fullness of Jesus' teaching.

c.] There is an eschatological urgency to all this. Hence, the need to travel light [cf. 10:9-15] - the end is in sight [v. 23]. The age inaugurated by Jesus is shared in by the Church - this is what constitutes the "final age." In this time of transition, there will be much crisis and division [cf. vv. 34-39].

d.] As Jesus did, every Apostolic Missionary should expect opposition and persecution [cf. 10:24, ff.]. This is presented by Mt through apocalyptic imagery [cf. vv. 16-23]. Persecution will come from the Jews [cf. v.17] and Gentiles [v. 18]. In the end, all opposition will be impotent.

e.] The Apostolic Missionary will be strengthened by the Spirit [vv. 19, f.] - the Father's Providence will be life-giving [cf. vv. 28-33]. This is why they - and all the faithful - can "dare" to say, "Our Father."

f.] The spirit behind all this is the identity of the Risen Christ. No disciple is above the Master, and each disciple needs to be like his/ her teacher, and the servant like his Master.. Whoever receives the Apostolic Missionary, receives Jesus Christ. There is an identity here between the Sender and the sent. Mt uses this to stress the abiding presence of the Risen Christ with the apparently insignificant "little ones".

b. The Final Commission - Mt 28:16-20: the Future:

1.] For many, this section is the synthesis of Mt's entire Gospel. This is the entrusting of the Apostolic Mission of Jesus Himself to the Church - this passage is quite similar to the commissioning of Prophets in the OT. In these few lines, Mt draws together the major themes of his Gospel.

a.] The Apostolic Mission is rooted in the Person of the Risen Christ Who reigns as Son of God, Man, within the Church. The 11, with the conspicuous absence of the traitor, return to Galilee [cf. 26:32; 28:7, 10] -the mountain top is the setting for revelation in this Gospel. Jesus appears in some power, and provokes their awe [cf. 28:17]. Jesus' declaration seems similar to Dn 7:1 - emphasis is placed on His divine authority - since this is so, then the Church needs to go forth.

b.] Their mandates is to "**make disciples**" - the community is to hand on what came to them through Jesus Christ - a conversion experience that touched them all to the depths. Belief in Jesus leads to transformation of life.

c.] The Apostolic Mission has no restrictions: **All** nations - the earlier restrictions are now taken away in the light of the Resurrection. There is no exclusion of the past - but, **an impressive broadening for the future**. For Mt, no group is the privileged one - all are judged to be among the People of God, all nations, all peoples. On the part of each convert, however, there needs to be a response to God's gracious offer of eternal life.

d.] The Apostolic Mission includes the formation of a community, a "church." This ecclesial interest is vital to understanding of Mt. This is the group that gathers in Jesus' name [cf. 16:18; 18:17, 20] - this is where community values are manifest: mercy, compassion, reconciliation.

e.] This Missionary challenge centers on **teaching** - this theme was conspicuously missing in c. 10 - but, now the disciples have been through the formation of Jesus; teaching, including the primary experience of His death and Resurrection - they are now ready to teach others. The content of their teaching is the following: to observe all that Jesus has commanded.

f.] The final promise is this arduous and difficult vocation [cf. CF # 185] is the accompanying presence of the Risen Jesus until the end of time [cf. 28:20]. The death and resurrection of Jesus open up the new age, the final times of

Salvation History. The abiding presence of the Risen Lord, the ultimate revelation of the ***Emmanuel***, will sustain it and animate it until the close of the age and the complete triumph of God's Kingdom.

2.] **Further Exegetical Reflections:**

a.] v. 16: there is some poignancy in the term "the eleven" - the "12" have been reduced by one [cf. 10:1, f.; 5; 11:1; 20:17; 26:14; Lk 24:9, 33; Ac 1:26]. They are asked, with Peter, to go up to Galilee - a command from Jesus Himself as well as from the Angel. The Apostolic Mission will begin where it did originally, with 'Jesus of Galilee'. There is a specific mountain where they are to meet. The holy mountains are always a place of revelation - Mount Moriah in the Abraham-Isaac sacrifice; Mount Sinai/Horeb in Exodus; Mount Tabor, of the Transfiguration; the mount of the temptations and Gethsemane; the Ascension - and ultimately, the spiritualized Mount Sion. In all, Mt notes seven mountains.

b.] v. 17: the disciples 'worshipped' Him - not only did they recognize Him, but they indeed believed that He had risen with the same physical body that they saw on the Cross. Their passing 'doubts' do not refer to unbelief, or perplexity. The verb used here is the same as the one presenting Peter, while walking on the water, began to sink [cf. 14:31] - o, you of little faith, why do you doubt? The word means here hesitation, indecision. This involves a "divided mind" brought about by inadequate Paschal Faith. Too much had happened too fast for them - they were in a state of uncertainty, "cognitive dissonance". Jesus' words, though, will accomplish for a faith-strengthened Church what the vision of the Risen Christ did not do: blessed are they who believe, and yet have not seen. Mt wanted believers to apply all this to themselves. A fluctuation between worship and indecision plagues everyone's steps. Trust and confidence in Jesus is necessary for every Apostolic Missionary.

c.] v. 18: Jesus "comes" to His Church - as in Jn, if you keep My words, the Father and I will "come" to you. The merciful Savior does not rebuke them for their lack of faith. He assures them of His own "authority"- "all things" have been given to Him by His Father. The Resurrection is the vindication of Jesus' words and deeds during His earthly sojourn. Jesus here anticipates His glorious exaltation, enthronement, perhaps based on David's [cf. 2 S 7:13]. The veil is taken away, as briefly during the Transfiguration - He is now endowed with the "sovereign authority" of God Himself. The Son of Man, as in Daniel of old, receives dominion, glory and kingship.

d.] v. 19: “Therefore”: indicates the authorization and the power for the Apostolic Mission comes from the Risen Jesus Himself Jesus’ personal authority, presence will empower even the most self-centered, and weak Apostles to carry out His heroic will. The “making of disciples” will lead these timorous, limited Apostles go all over the world. Disciple is always a “learner”. a “pupil”. To be a disciple of Jesus means to follow after righteousness as articulated in Jesus’ teaching. The hint of universality was noted in the allusion to Abraham [cf. 1:1], and then the Magi [cf. 2:1-12]; followed by the centurion [cf. 8:15, ff.] - and finally the Canaanite woman’s daughter [15:21-28]. The command “to baptize” is unusual, as the only other mention of this is John’s Baptism [cf. Mt 3; 21:25; cf. Jn 3:22; 4:1-2]. The practice of the earliest Church backs up this reading. The original formula seems to have been “in Jesus’ Name” [cf. Ac 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; Rm 6:3; Ga 3:27] - but, here we have a rare NT passage where all three divine Persons are noted. Whatever be the consensus, the Trinitarian baptismal formula brings the baptized right before the presence of the Most Blessed Trinity.

e.] v. 20: the final challenge is **to teach**: Jesus often taught [cf. 4:23; 5:2; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:34; 21:23; 26:55]. This is an earlier explicit challenge [cf. 5:19]. The lesson is submission of intellect and will to Jesus’ message - there is needed the acceptance of the legitimate teacher. He will be in their midst until the end of time. though unseen, all will share in His power, being engrafted into Him. Whoever will receive His word, will receive Him.

3.] **Further Theological Reflections**

a.] The emphasis in this Gospel is on the Risen Jesus Who commissions His Apostles - this is the ultimate instruction of His Teaching - the Holy Spirit through the ages will “remind” the Church, and offer the means to present this ever anew. There is in all this a sublime **Christology, Discipleship and also Ecclesiology**. This is the “up-beat” conclusion to Mt’s Gospel - and it emphasizes the **teaching with authority of Jesus Himself - the Apostolic Mission is the one Jesus received from His Father: like the divine “life”, “love” - and now “Mission.”** All are “handed on”.

b.] Only Mt has this commissioning to the Apostolic Mission in this form. For Lk [cf. 24:47], the Gospel of Mercy, there is challenged **the repentance for the forgiveness of sins** to be proclaimed in His name to all the nations. Mt shows the disciples worshipping the Risen Christ as does Lk [cf. 24:52]. Mt’s Commission is similar to the 4th Gospel: love is shown by “keeping” the Lord’s word and the Lord promises His indwelling through Jn [14:23].

c.] There are three significant present participles describing the Apostolic Mission for Mt: **going... baptizing ...teaching.** Linked with the imperative verb, assume the power of imperatives. The fulfillment of this divine command becomes possible in the light of the promise of Jesus: ***I am with you...*** The qualifying **all** recurs four separate times.

d.] Some see these verses as a kind of Enthronement Hymn [cf. Dn 7:13-14; Ph 2:9-11] - it has been called "a word of revelation", a "theophany", a "farewell commission", "priestly blessing", "covenant renewal", an "official decree", a "commissioning" from the Moses-Joshua traditions [cf. Dt 31:14-15, 23; Jos 1:1-9]. While this passage in Mt does come close to both Enthronement and Commissioning narratives, it remains unique unto itself, with no specific literary genre supporting it, that would have the consensus of the experts. The text is *sui generis* - because its background is.

e.] If one accepts the reality of the Risen Jesus Christ, it is He, in His glory, Who speaks here and Who commissions the Apostles, and the Church with His own Personal Mission All His limitations are now behind Him - the Words of the Risen Jesus are the only vindication for the legitimacy of the universal Apostolic Mission.

Conclusion

[1] The Risen Jesus Christ is central to the existence and mission of the Church. It is the Risen Jesus Who commissions His Church, and effectively, all the disciples in every period of history. Each and every member is to go everywhere whatsoever - use any means whatsoever with the message of the Good News in the name and authority of Jesus Christ. The responsibility is "arduous and difficult" - to make disciples of all nations. The Risen Christ, however, will be with us, all days, even to the consummation of the world. The great commission, with the promise of the divine accompaniment, is one of the priceless treasures of the Church herself. It provides comfort, strength and hope and will until the final dawning of time.

[2] With the death and resurrection of Jesus, all Salvation History reaches its turning point. The signs and wonders that God works at this time are not some superficial apocalyptic seasoning added - this is Mt's way of affirming the New Age - the way to God open to all. The one sacrifice of Jesus has obtained the remission of all sins "for the many", for "all." The life-giving death of Jesus is the end of the old sacrificial cult of the Temple - the veil is rent, tombs are opened, and the new

community of Paschal Faith is born: Jesus is the Son of God and has risen from the dead in His human nature. The crucifiers of Jesus are seized with a holy fear - even the pagan soldier opening the side of Jesus notes: truly, this was God's Son.

[3] After the Sabbath, the first day of the week is beginning - the women hasten from the tomb to fulfill their commission, since their joy outweighs their fear. Jesus meets them, greets them with His Easter joy. They prostrate before His feet. Jesus repeats almost word for word the message of the Angel. The risen body is real - it can be touched. The same Jesus - born of the Virgin Mary - the One Who taught on the mountain in Galilee, is the same now present in His risen life. Jesus, the crucified, has risen.

[4] The Risen Jesus reconstitutes the fellowship that He had during His earthly sojourn - a fellowship that had been violently broken by sin. The response to fellowship with Jesus is to do His Father's will - as Jesus always had done, and which was His "food". They are called to be "Church". The Good News of the Resurrection - and its challenge for the after life, needs to be brought to the far corners of the world.

[5] Mt 28:18-20 is the key that unlocks Mt's entire Gospel - the core group of Jesus' followers, the Apostles, are the symbol of all Church members, especially her leaders and her missionaries. They are now "brothers" of the Risen Lord, and they now obey heroically the command of the One they deserted in the Passion. They return to Jesus' humble place of origin, they come to the mountain, for the ultimate revelation. The Trinitarian formula is the charge of the Apostolic Mission. This is the founding of the Church by the Risen Jesus.

[6] This integral Christology is the basis of the Church's existence and mission. This is "High Christology" at its best - this places the Son on the same level as the Father and the Holy Spirit in the triadic formula. Baptism plunges one into the mystery of communal life: with the Trinity and with other Church members. The baptized life is one of lived justice - i.e., the living of God's Will. This is the synthesis of His message:

[a] Jesus is not merely a Teacher - He is THE teacher.

[b] Jesus not only teaches morality - the Beatitudes are a description of the life He lives. He exemplifies His own message of obedient trust in the Father and love for all, throughout His life and finally in His death [cf. 3:15; 4:1-11; 8:17; 12:18-21; 26:36-56; 27:34-44]. In His Paschal Mystery, He defeats once and for all the

powers of sin and death, and thus opens up the new “life.” This is a life in the Most Blessed Trinity- the life of the exalted Son, one molded on the teaching of the earthy Jesus.

[7] There is great emphasis on “Community” - there is a constant emphasis on the “Church.” Luke would develop his ecclesiology in a separate book to be pondered later, as “Acts of the Apostles.” The Church’s function is to hand on the teachings - the life of Jesus Christ. The function of teaching could only be taken up by the Apostles after the completion of the Paschal Mystery. The power to teach and to interpret includes all of Jesus’ doctrine and His commands: the mystery of God Himself and His Plan.

[8] The most comprehensive title in Mt’s Gospel, for some interpreters, is “Son of God” - on this side of the Parousia, “Son of Man” is eclipsed by “Son of God.” Yet, “Son of Man” occurs in Mt some 30 times - while, “Son of God” occurs only nine times. The absolute use of “the Son” occurs five times, three times in one verse [cf. 11:27]. The entire Church is called to share in Christ’s Filiation.

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II. According to John 20:19-28: The Glorious Stigmata and the Apostolic Mission of Forgiveness *“... as the Father has sent Me, even so I send you...”*

Presentation:

Even though the question of the Apostolic Mission has not played a role in the flood of recent studies on John, these studies often do have a direct bearing on the subject. The following does come to mind from these reflections:

1. The Mission Perspective of the Johannine Church

a. The Johannine community seems to have been in dialogue with a wide spectrum of groups in the first century. The Gospel seems to be the end product of a succession of encounters with other groups that have influenced Jn’s theology. The Gospel may indeed represent the final attempt to communicate with a variety of partners in this dialogue.

b. For some interpreters, the community itself went through a number of stages as it developed its own unique Christology and community identity. Most likely, it began in Palestine with a group of Jews, including some followers of John the Baptist - and these had come to accept Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. This standard Christology began to evolve with those Jewish believers who had an “anti-temple” bias - not unlike the Essenes, and other first century groups. Jesus came more to be seen in a Mosaic model, as one who had seen God - rather than simply in Davidic terms. This opened the way for the classical “pre-existence theology”: Jesus, the Son of Man, the Word of God, had come to reveal the Father.

c. Such convictions led to a rift with Pharisaic Judaism - and to some tensions, and eventual break, with groups sustaining a “lower Christology.” After the year 70, Christians were expelled from the Synagogue - there seems to be an allusion in Jn 9. There is a separation from Pharisees and also those Jews who would not accept a pre-existence Christology [cf. Jn 6:60-66]. There seems to be a hint of some tension with the mainline apostolic Church. Peter is important to the 4th Gospel, indicating the allegiance of its author to the apostolic group. However, there is a “Beloved Disciple” who was not Peter - and there are those times [as did Paul] where this Disciple seems to have had an insight not granted to Peter [cf. Jn 20:1-10]. There may have been tension between these two groups.

d. The coming of the Gentiles to the faith is an additional factor [cf. Jn 7:35; 11:52; 12:20-22]. There was a significant shift in membership from purely Jewish and Palestinian composition to a mixed membership - including Hellenistic Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. This adds to the universalism. Very little evidence in Jn for the Jewish-Gentile tension noted in Mt, Lk and Ac. The open acceptance of the Greeks seems to be a *fait accompli*, an indication that this community had already burned its bridges with Judaism. Its theology was fully **universal** in scope. The identification of these groups is still somewhat guess-work - but some evidence does suggest that the Church of the 4th Gospel developed its own theology also through its diversified membership. Its unyielding commitment to this broader view brought it into harsh confrontation with Pharisaic Judaism and also with segments of more “conservative” Christians as well.

e. The polemics in Jn do not rule out his significant harmony with other groups. The 4th Gospel accepts the traditional appreciations of Jesus and aims toward a higher synthesis. Side by side one may note the older and the newer formulations - some almost seeming contradictory. The very literary form of Jn’s Gospel is a lesson in point: the “Signs Gospel” [cc. 1-12] included a series of miracle stories indicating Jesus’ messianic power - plus the Passion Narrative proclaiming Jesus’ death was fully

in accord with the previous Scriptures. Jn adopted the “Gospel” form, but completely re-interpreted it. The “Signs” reveal Jesus’ power to heal and His identity as the Father’s “exegete.” Not only did Jesus die, but His death is a triumph, an exaltation of the Son of Man Who reveals God’s saving love for the world.

f. Jn both “conserves” and “transforms” the message: He accepts the traditional titles for Jesus [cf. 1:19-51], but gives special importance to the “Son of Man”. This describes Jesus as the preexistent and heavenly ruler. Hence, in Jn there are evident conservation and then adaptation of earlier material. The sacramental experience makes concrete the Christological symbols in the Bread of Life discourse [cf. Jn 6] - references to a future eschatology are alongside the realized eschatology. Startling claims for Jesus’ divinity are next to His constant submission to the father. The Love command, broadly developed [cc. 13-15] absorbs all the other demands of the Gospel.

f. This reinterpretation of traditional categories relates to the convictions of this community especially regarding the universality of Jesus Christ. Jn pushes traditional Christian categories to their ultimate scope. His tendency to move from the particular to the more universal is itself a phenomenon detectable in the development of several religious systems as they fell under the influence of Greek culture. This universalism of the message flowed from the universal significance of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus made His Father known in the Holy Spirit: and only faith in this Jesus, a faith expressed in love, can be adequate. His implication is that as long as one tries to grasp Jesus as Jew, or Greek, or as Gnostic: all are doomed to failure. Jesus is the fulfillment of all these hopes.

g. Jn’s courageous Christology and its vigorous interaction with other viewpoints brought the 4th Gospel into creative dialogue with its environment. The Gospel’s conviction about the ultimate significance of Jesus as revealer of the Father led it courageously to reinterpret traditional formulations and to proclaim the Gospel in powerful cosmic language and symbols. The 4th Gospel is significant for its universal Mission.

2. Christology and Mission

a. The focus on Jesus Christ is the key to understand Jn’s Apostolic Mission. His Christology is universal, cosmic in scope. The core of this Christology is that Jesus Christ is the unique Revealer of the living God [cf. 1:18]. This is the central conviction of the 4th Gospel.

1.] The Prologue is the Gospel in synthesis [cf. 1:1-18]. This conceptual center of the 4th Gospel is the core from which all else radiates. There is a poetic genius here, that knows no parallel in the NT - this states the origin, the purpose, cosmic proportions of Jesus' Mission from the Father. He is the word "from the beginning", intimately bonded with God, and revealing the Father. the word is God!

2.] This revealing Word begins a progressive penetration of the human sphere. All created reality is made in and through Him - all creation finds "light", "life" in Him - the Word penetrates even this world - if the inhabitants of this history accept Him, they will find their true identity. The Word is embedded in the human sphere by becoming "flesh" - and He lives in the midst of His community. The believing community will come to recognize the glory of God. this is revealed through the word made flesh. He thus receives an unparalleled abundance of grace.

3.] Some experts note the Hellenism in the style of writing: as the descending and the ascending; the "Logos", the "cosmos", "flesh". Nonetheless, it must be borne in mind that the OT as well, has developed an almost hypostacized notion of the "Word of God", which creates, commands, rewards. The dynamism of God's Word is personified [cf. Is 55:10,f.]. The Wisdom motif is highly developed - it sets a table and sends out invitations [cf. Ws 9:1, f., 9; Pr 8:22-31] - it comes down to dwell in this world [cf. Ws 9:10; 18:14, f.; Si 24:8-12] - it meets acceptance, or rejection [cf. Si 24:19-22; Pr 8:32, ff.]. Jn boldly identifies Jesus as the Word of God, Wisdom Incarnate. The Logos pre-exists from all eternity, the Word-made-flesh - in Him, the believer encounters the Glory of God and thus achieves the ultimate destiny of God's creation, eternal life.

b. Jn's vision is cosmic and universal, while remaining historic and specific. His earthy Jesus is the center of the cosmos and all of history. The issues are all "ultimates": the origin and meaning of creation, the attainment of authentic life, the search for God. While Jn is intensely Christocentric, Jesus is the answer to all these "ultimates"

c. The unique, intimate bond between Jesus and His "Father" manifest the very personal role Jesus enjoys as His Revealer. Jn lays special emphasis on "the Son of Man" [cf. Jn 1:19-51] - it is used to describe His mysterious heavenly origin in His Mission to reveal the Father. Jesus' most intense moments are the culmination of His Paschal Mystery. His death is a triumphant return to the Father at the completion of His Mission. Jesus is "lifted up" [cf. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34] - His unique "hour" in which the Father's Glory will be made known [cf. 12:27, f.; 13:1; 17:1, 4, f.]. Jesus' death for

His “friends” [cf. 15:3] reveals infinite divine mercy [cf. 13:16,f.]. Jn is most consistent in tying in “the Son of Man” and Heavenly Origin - this depicts His descent to reveal the Father supremely at the moment of His death [cf. 3:14; 8:28] When Jesus is “lifted up” on the Cross, He completes His Mission of the Father’s saving love for the world [cf. 8:28] - it is to this He, when raised up, “draws” His “own” to the Apostolic Missionary.

d. The “I Am” sayings draw much reflection: throughout the 4th Gospel, Jesus uses this Divine Name, revealed to Moses, to designate Himself. the “I Am” sayings refer to: bread, life, resurrection, the way, the truth and the life. Thus in Jesus one encounters God - His is always a salvific presence, implied in the very Name of Jesus. With great genius, Jn sublimates even more his revelation theology: all these predicates are symbols of the human quest for God. These are the hungers, the thirsts, the yearning in the life-long search for meaning - the Wisdom literature portrays these in such terms. In “the Bread of Life” [cf. 6:35, 51] and “the Light of the world” [cf. 8:12, 9:5], the perennial quest of humanity finds its fulfillment. Jesus’ Mission is to make the Father known.

e. Jn’s Christology is eminently “missionary.” His challenge on earth was to communicate His “Father” and His Plan of sharing life eternally with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Jewish mind, the “sent” was one with his “sender”, and is invested with his authority. Jn 3:17 is major in this sense: God sent His only Son into this world that the world might be saved through Him. [cf. 6:38, f.; 12:49, f.]. This is Jesus’ “work”, “food” [cf. 4:34]. The Father is the One Who “sends” Jesus on the salvific, cosmic mission - to accept the Son, and to come through Him in the Holy Spirit, to the Father. Whoever hears Jesus, hears the One Who sent Him [cf. 5:24]. The Son is the way to achieve eternal life [3:15]. There is an intimate, personal relationship between Father and Son which defies explanation.

f. Along with “revelation” and “mission”, **witness** is another major Johannine category. Some see here the ancient **Rib** pattern, the **tribunal** format: Jesus and the Father offer their testimony in behalf of One another. Jesus certifies that He is indeed from the Father [cf. 5:30-47; 8:17-19] Other characters, as John the Baptist [1:6-8], the Beloved Disciple [cf. 19:35] and the community itself, all bear witness of Jesus’ Mission received from the Father for the world. to bear witness is likewise the role of the Paraclete.

g. There is little doubt, then, that Jn sees Jesus’ mission as “cosmic.” The Synoptics use the word “kingdom”, the “rule” of God, as the keynote of His Mission. Jn pushes aside all limitations that might be inherent in such a symbol. The arena is

international: Jesus' origins are "with" God, He "is" God - His Mission is to reveal the face of the merciful Father to all human beings [cf. 1:18] He is indeed "the savior of the world" [cf. 4:42], the light of the world [cf. 8:12; 9:5] - the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world [cf. 1:29] - the bread for the life of the world [6:51]. Jn embeds the cosmic mission in the historical ministry of Jesus.

h. After the cosmic poetry of the Prologue [1:1-18] and takes on the Gospel genre, a narrative of a human life lived in Judea of Galilee, and the Tansjordan. Jn consistently describes the meaning of Jesus' Person and Mission on a universal, cosmic plane. This is not only because of the sources of the Gospel, but much more this served as Jn's goal. He focuses intently on the **person of Jesus**, but it is the question of the Heavenly Father and His loving mercy that permeates the entire Gospel. The unseen God utters this divine "word" [cf. 1:2] - He is the One to be sought by humanity. Jn's community is convinced that Jesus is the authoritative revealer of God and the only sure access to Him. Hence, the Chirstology and Theology of the 4th Gospel are one - the scope of this basic question makes Jn's Gospel truly universal.

3. The Paraclete and the Mission

a. In handing on His own Mission from the Father to the Apostles, there is an important role given to the Holy Spirit - as with the Apostolic Mission presented in Acts. The 4th Gospel does share some of the traditional Spirit imagery as noted in the Synoptics. John the Baptist testifies that the Spirit "abides" in Jesus [cf. 1:33] - this is something like Jesus' messianic investiture with the Spirit in the Baptismal scenes as noted in the Synoptics. Jesus' own messianic mission is described as Baptism in water and the Holy Spirit [cf. 1:33; 3:5,8]. Jesus' ministry inaugurates the Age of the Spirit. However, in speaking with Nicodemus, Jn moves behind the traditional conception. There emphasis is given to phrases such as: "to be born from above", "of water and the Spirit" [cf. 3:5]. Belief in Jesus as the Revealer of the Father's love is the authentic access to the life of the Spirit.

b. Another "conventional" element is that the Risen Christ "gives" the Holy Spirit. In the conferral of His own Apostolic Mission, the Risen Jesus "breathes" on the disciples after showing His Glorious Stigmata [cf. Jn 20:22]. There is a link between the Paschal Mystery's culminating moments and the community's reception of the Spirit [cf. 3:34, f.] - and the water symbolism [cf. 4:10; 7:38, f.; 19:37]. This is like Lk in the concluding chapters of his Gospel and the opening of Acts.

c. The more specific Johannine term is “Paraclete”, where he focuses on the function of the Holy Spirit within the community. The last discourse is of utmost importance - it speaks of Jesus’ unique relationship to the Father, His role as Teacher, the necessity of faith in Him, and vital instructions to the community of faith on love and service. By its very nature, the discourse focuses on the life of the community in the post-resurrection time. It is a “priestly prayer of farewell” - speaking of Jesus’ freely chosen departure and its consequences for life in the community. There is no surprise that the motifs of the Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Mission would be emphasized.

d. In cc. 14-16, the Holy Spirit is called the “Paraclete.” There is no exact equivalent, but it means “Mediator”. “Advocate”, “Comforter” and “Encourager.” This broad range of meaning behind the word might be the very reason why Jn chose it, to describe in some way the mysterious and multi-splendored role of the Holy Spirit. The Paraclete sustains the same life-giving relationship that the disciples had enjoyed with their Lord during His earthly Mission. Thus, Jesus can speak of the Father sending “another Paraclete” to be with the community [cf. 14:16] The Holy Spirit sent by the Father does what for the post-Resurrection Church what Jesus did for His disciples when they were in His earthly company. The Paraclete, therefore is “with” the disciples [14:16] - He “teaches” and “guides” them [14:26; 16:13], reveals the Father’s message to them [16:13] and enters into a prophetic confrontation with non-belief [cf. 16:8-11].

e. The Paraclete does more than “hold” Jesus’ place: His presence so enriches the post-Easter community that its state is better than that of Jesus’ own presence among His disciples: “blessed are they who do not see, yet believe” [cf. 20:29] All through Jesus’ earthly sojourn, the disciples were unable to grasp his message [cf. 2:22]. The Paraclete will “remind” the Church until the end of time, everything Jesus said [cf. 14:26]. The community, under the power of the Risen Christ and the Spirit, will be able to do even great signs than those which Jesus Himself performed [cf. 14:12]. The Paraclete does not merely replace the presence of the risen Christ, He intensifies this.

f. This intensification of the Divine Presence through the Risen Christ and the Paraclete is linked to the Church’s Missionary experience. In sending His Apostles in the power of His Glorious Stigmata, the Divine Son immediately empowers them with His Holy Spirit [cf. 20:22]. The Paraclete is the Father’s Gift, sent by Him, to “bear witness” [cf. 15:26,f.] This Paraclete will accuse the power of evil in the world, Jesus as Jesus did, and just as the community will be called upon do [cf. 16:8; 17:14-18].

g, It may be that “the greater works” [cf. 4:12] and the deeper understanding of Jesus’ teaching [cf. 14:26] are both the results of the presence of the presence of the Paraclete and are tied to the community’s Apostolic Missionary experience. Taking Jesus’ message from Palestine to the “ends of the earth”, and re-interpreting for the Hellenistic world - were brave new steps in the post-Resurrection Church. Lk understood this creative development that went far beyond Jesus’ own ministry as resulting from the power of the Holy Spirit.

h. The Synoptics, as well as Paul, all attribute the power of missionary preaching and witness and the eventual heroic martyrdoms - as well as the profound grasp of the doctrine and the sublime presentation of it - before hostile powers to the presence of the Holy Spirit within the community. The Christian generation after the apostolic eye-witnesses are “more blessed” precisely because they enjoy the full benefits of Jesus’ redemptive work, the super-abundant power of the Spirit of God on those who believe. The Spirit-Paraclete makes the Risen Christ more present, more comprehensible, more transforming.. In this Spirit inspired Apostolic Mission to the world, the Church discovers more and more the true meaning of “the Word made flesh.”

4. The Community and the Apostolic Mission

a. Some have read “sectarianism” into Jn’s Gospel, i.e., a closed, embattled community, pitted against hostile groups and ideologies. It is noted that Jn does manifest a kind of dualism: between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, believers and non-believers. It is clear that Jesus was “hated” and the Church will be [17:14]. The community may never be “of the world” [17:15-16]. There were indeed conflicts on a number of fronts simultaneously with both Jewish and also Christian groups in the understanding of the Person and message of Jesus Christ.

b. The emphasis on mutual love, for some, is indicative of a “siege mentality” - a tightly knit group seeking its own survival needs this inner strength. If this, however, is over-emphasized, it would much reduce Jn’s clear Apostolic Missionary mandate. This would hinder a thrust toward the broader world scene - this would leave the burden on the world, to seek its entry into the small group. Hence, the excessively strong sectarian interpretation does not hold up. There is a crucial place reserved for the apostolic mission. This is essential to any understanding of Jn.

c. Jn’s portrayal of the disciples is like that of the Synoptics - however, rather than being “called”, the disciples are “drawn” - as stars in a constellation, and

gradually deepen their knowledge of Him [cf. 1:15-19]. This same fundamental criterion holds for the disciples: all are invited to the Gospel message - to believe in Jesus' manifestation of the Heavenly Father - and then, follow the Father's Word. The faith that is being asked is intense and penetrating.

1.] Some fall away when Jesus reveals Himself "bread from heaven" [cf. 6:60-66]. At this vital challenge, Peter responds for the others: where would they go, for Jesus has the words of eternal life as the Holy One of God? [cf. 6:69].

2.] Nicodemus is another example of inadequate discipleship - he comes to Jesus, a teacher from God, in darkness [3:2], but, does not get the message about being "from above" and about the Son of Man. However, Nicodemus grows in his appreciation of the light and eventually defends Jesus [cf. 7:50-52]. He is the one who provides for the burial of Jesus [cf. 19:39].

3.] The Samaritan woman only comes to the light gradually [c. 4] and the blind man [c. 9] illustrate the progressive coming to the faith. They come eventually to recognize Jesus at a deeper level than His traditional titles would allow. Ultimately, Jesus is seen as the true font of life-giving water.

4.] The "Beloved Disciple", by contrast, stands in the Gospel as one who is in union with Jesus [cf. 13:23; 21:20-23] - he becomes a member of Jesus' own family [cf. 19:26, f.] and gives testimony that serves as the basis of the Gospel [cf. 19:35; 21:24].

d. "Believing in Jesus" - as important as this is - does not satisfy the totality of Christian existence. In, with the entire NT, sees love and service as necessary responses of every true believer [cf. 13:15]. The believing disciple is "Jesus' friend" [cf. 15:4, ff.] - "abides in Him" [cf. 15:1-11], shares in the same life that unites Father, Son and Holy Spirit [cf. 15:10, 17: 21:23, 26]. The disciples, too, must manifest caring love among themselves [cf. 13:12-16, 34-35; 15:12-17]. Faith, Hope and Love are the foundations of Christian existence that identifies the followers of Christ.

e. All of this is behind the acceptance of a share in the Apostolic Mission of Jesus to the world. In Jesus, Christology and Mission meet. The community's mission is the same one that He receives from the Father - as is the life and love of Jesus that of life within God participated in by the community. It is AS the Father sends, that Jesus also sends. This appears also in the Priestly Prayer of Farewell: **As** You sent Me into the world, **so** I have sent them into the world [cf. 17:18]. The whole atmosphere of prayer is charged with an awareness of the "costly discipleship" of the disciples in

their taking up the Apostolic Mission. The Father is the One who sends - this, then is handed on to the Disciples through Jesus: with regard to the father, Jesus is “sent” as are the Apostles with regard to Him.

f. At the conclusion of the Samaritan woman’s story, another strong Mission text appears - Jesus’ food is to do the will of the One who sent Him, and to accomplish His work. Immediately the Apostolic Mission crops up: I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor...[cf. 4:35-38]. The triggering of this Mission awaits the Holy Spirit [cf. 20:21-22; 15:26-27].

g. To understand the Apostolic Mission, it is necessary to understand better the Personal Mission that Jesus received from His Father. There are several “sending” texts:

- the Prologue offers previews of coming attractions: the Word breaks into creation - into the “world” - to be “life” and “light” to humanity - in order to give power to become the children of God, to make the unseen God known - these are all eventual challenges for Apostolic Mission;

- other important “sending” passages ratify this sublime challenge of sharing in the salvific Mission of Jesus Himself;

- God so loved the world that He gave up His only Son so that the world might have eternal life [cf. 3:16]

- Jesus has come down from heaven not to do His own will, but the will of the One who sent Him - that He should lose nothing of all that He gave His Son, but raise all up on the last day [cf. 6:38, ff.];

- The conclusion of the “Book of Signs” is that whoever would believe in Jesus, really believes in the One who sent Him. He has come as Light - if anyone will listen and heed, will not be judged [cf. 12:44-47].

h. There is emphasis throughout on the salvific purpose of Jesus’ being sent and in His sending the Apostles Jesus’ Mission is the one Mission, on which the community’s is grounded and shaped. This aspect of the Gospel’s openness to this world is positive - admittedly, there are also some negative aspects of the “world” in John: the world hates Jesus, the disciples [14:18, f.]; the world rejoices while the community sorrows [cf. 16:20] No Christian can be “of” the world [17:14, ff.] - and Satan is the Prince of this world [cf. 14:30].

i. Such sayings do not neutralize the fact that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Despite the fact that the world was created by and through the Logos, it is capable to rejecting that Word [cf. 1:10, f.]. The “world” is indicative of humanity itself - it is that arena where human life and divine grace interact. Hence, there is

freedom to accept or reject - some can prefer the darkness [cf. 3:19, f.]. The evangelist is not speak “metaphysically” - he is not speaking about the inherent goodness or weakness of the created order. There are both elements that make it up. He is speaking existentially - for God, the world was created in his love - the divine Son has not been sent to condemn the world but to save it. However, humanly speaking, the world can either accept Him, or reject His grace - belief as well as non-belief are possible, and this is what determines the positive or negative characterization of the “world” in John.

j. The negative evaluation of the “world” came to the community from its missionary experience: they do not all succeed! The community of John knew that even Jesus Himself had mixed results - some people found new life in Him, others rejected Him. The early Church’s Mission to Israel followed a similar pattern: some acceptance, but also the bitter experience of rejection and alienation. By the time of the final formulation of the 4th Gospel, it is most likely that similar patterns were occurring in the Church’ quest in the Gentile world. There have been various tendencies in the Church:

1.] Those texts reflecting alienation from a hostile world have comforted those Christians content with their inward-looking. They might have outsiders to their own devices unless they show signs of being attracted by God toward Christian truth. This produces an “Alamo”, or “fortress” mentality. On the other hand, these texts have annoyed others who may be most conscious of a mission to the world. They may want to infiltrate it, and change it, win it over for Jesus Christ. Yet, the 4th Gospel allows for naive naïveté.

2.] The “world” is not simply an unplowed field - that is simply neutral. There is a Prince of this world actively hostile to Jesus and His Church. In some ways it is still true: *Christus contra mundum* . Because they were rejected by their “own”, this early community then turned toward the gentiles. The realization that some preferred the darkness was a bitter pill for them to swallow. No one can be astounded if their best efforts fail.

k. In its sad defeats, the early community was “educated” - in their grasp of Jesus’ own history and violent ending, as well as the prophetic cast of the community’s mission, they were “educated: to the reality of the Apostolic Mission. Jesus boldly confronted His opponents, challenged their lack of faith, their closed hearts, their false priorities [cf. cc. 5 and 9]. Nonetheless, despite formidable opposition, He overcame the world [16:33]. The Paraclete gives the courage necessary to stand up to this world and its powers, to give testimony to the truth [cf.

14:17; 15:26; 16:8-1115]. As a result, the disciples' mission is modeled on that Personal Mission of Jesus and is energized by the Paraclete. It cannot be side-track by the wiles of this world. This explains the tone of Jesus' prayer: the world, the evil one, "hate" them [17:14, f.] because they cannot belong to this world that is hostile to the Word. The disciples have to remain "in" this hard world [17:14] because they share Jesus' Personal Mission to save it [cf. 17:18-21].

l. For John, there is only one Mission: that of Jesus, the Paraclete, the Apostles and the community. Scholars have distinguished four different types of "sending" in Jn:

- John the Baptist is sent by God to testify to Jesus [1:6-8;3:28];
- Jesus Himself is sent by the Father to testify about the father and to do His work;
- The Paraclete is sent by both Father and [through] the Son to give testimony about Jesus;
- And finally, the Apostles are sent by Jesus to do as He did - and this is now the role of the Church.

m. These "Missions" are all inter-related, all are one and the same. All four are directed to the challenging "world", and the salvation of the world is their goal. They all involve a **personal relationship** between the Sender - Who is always God - and the sent. None of those "sent" ever speak on their own but solely on behalf of the One Who sent them. All of these Missions revolve around Jesus: His coming, His Suffering and Risen Presence, and His return at the end of time. The disciples are infused with the courage to declare His Word to the whole world. The constellation of this Mission means that all are being drawn upwards and onward by Jesus and this is on going. Jn's Christology is all geared for the continuing quest for the face of the merciful Father. The end-point of the Apostolic Mission is not Jesus but the Most Blessed Trinity. The Father is not "sent" - but, He does "come" in a new way to those who will respond to His indwelling Presence in and through grace.

n. Jesus' great prayer is that the divine **perichoresis** might be shared in some way: that they may be in us, so that the world might believe. That all may be one as Jesus is with His Father - that the world might know that the Father has sent Jesus, and He has loved them as the Father has loved Jesus [17:20-23].

5. Further Exegetical Reflections [Jn 20:19, ff.]

a. This seems to have happened on Easter night [cf. also Lk 24:33, ff.] - it was already evening when Jesus dined with the two disciples of Emmaus. In the

Markan addition[cf. 16:14] there is noted an appearance to the Eleven at table and it was that first day of the week. Is [52:6] spoke of the Lord's people knowing His name on "that" day.

1.] There may be Eucharistic overtones here: this appearance on the first day of the week, and then the episode involving Thomas exactly one week later: the disciples assemble on the Lord's day, the blessing is given [Peace be to you!] - and the Holy Spirit will forever descend upon believers. And Thomas makes a Profession of Faith. Christ will be present in different degrees in the Word of God and in the Eucharist: "The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend. In the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the whole Christ, is truly, really and substantially contained...The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ..."⁹.

2.] This passage in Jn is for some the first evidence that the Christian observance of Sunday arose from the association of that day ¹⁰ with the Resurrection. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote that no longer do we live for the Sabbath, but for the Lord's Day on which life dawned for us through Him and His death. Perhaps in the beginning, Jewish converts to Christianity met after sunset after the Sabbath to break the Eucharistic bread.

b. "Peace to you!": These same words are also in Lk [24:36]. When Jesus walked on the water He tried to reassure His followers: It is I - do not be afraid [cf. Jn 6:20; Mk 6:50; Mt 14:27]. This Peace is a traditional Hebrew greeting: ***shalom***. Some see this, too, as a formula of revelation, as in Joshua [cf. 6:23]: Peace to you, do not be afraid, you shall not die. The frightened Daniel [cf. 10:19] is reassured by the angel: Peace to you! It seems that on Jesus' lips it is not just an ordinary greeting - this is His prayer, His hope for His "own." They are also a declaration - peace has come, the catharsis is over, Jesus has risen! The Lord indeed is with us, ***Emmanuel, Dominus vobiscum***.

⁹cf. CCC ## 1373-1381, concerning Eucharistic Presence.

¹⁰For these comments, cf. Raymond Brown's Commentary on John's Gospel.

c. “He showed them His hands and His Side”: as is known, Lk [cf. 24, 39, f.] has “hands and feet” - Lk never specifies the lance thrust in the side. This is the revelation of the Sorrowful and Glorious Stigmata. Many feel that Jn adds “side” in that twice his gospel speaks of the Beloved Disciple leaning on the side of Christ at the Last Supper - and further to harmonize with his description of the lance wound after Christ’s death [cf. 19:34].

d. “He breathed on them ... Receive [a] holy Spirit”: this calls to mind a New Creation [cf. Gn 2:7] - as breathing first life into Adam. There was the ancient belief that the breath of the holy had some kind of power - for Jn, the symbol of breathing is connected to the forgiveness of sin. Some find here the roots of apostolic succession: Jesus offers what is deepest within Him, His own Spirit. Western theologians have used this text to show that within the Trinity the Holy Spirit proceeded by “spiration” - as Jesus “ex-spired”, He “in-spired” His apostles with His new life. While there is no definite article here, the customary interpretation here is that Jesus Christ indeed infused the Holy Spirit into His “own”.

e. “A week later...Jesus came ... and told Thomas”: there is for some interpreters the biblical basis for the celebration of the 8th day - the Epistle of Barnabas also echoes the Johannine sequence of the happenings on Easter Sunday - Jesus arose, appeared, and ascended. Jn places a week of conclusion here perhaps to match his “inauguration week” at the beginning. These weeks would share the week of creation, and the creative breathing forth of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was indeed expected - and He knows of Thomas’ doubting from his absence the week before.

f. “Become a Believer”: Thomas is being asked to change his attitude - he had manifested incredulity and is being challenged to conversion. His enthusiastic response has become now the challenge of the Church: **“My Lord and my God!”** - a cross between a vocative and a proclamation of faith: You are indeed my Lord and my God! Some note that “Lord” pertains to the Jesus of history, Who has gone through the catharsis of Calvary, and has risen - and “God” is a theological evaluation of the Person of Jesus Christ.

1.] It has been noted that vv. 19-23 presents the five characteristics of the post-resurrectional appearances:

- the bereft situation of the disciples;
- some fear for themselves;
- the appearance and the greeting: Peace!
- the consequent recognition of Jesus;
- the element of command.

2.] There is great emphasis on the tangibility of the Risen Body of Jesus - Jesus stood in front of them [cf. Jn 20:19; Lk 24:36] - in each account attention is drawn to His hands. The Joy of the disciples is a common motif - there is a bit of a pause before the commission of the Risen Christ [cf. Jn 20:21; Lk 24:44] Both Gospels mention the forgiveness of sins [cf. Jn 20:23; Lk 24:47]. John specifically mentions the sending of the disciples [v. 21] and the giving of the Holy Spirit [v. 22]. For Lk, forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations [24:47] - and the promise of the Heavenly Father [v. 49].

3.] The following are elements important to the Gospel:

[a] First, the **Apostolic Mission** [v. 21] - this is the same Mission upon which Jesus was commissioned by His Heavenly Father: to forgive sins. In Lk [24:47] he notes that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in Christ's Name to all nations. In Mt, as we have seen, it is to make disciples of all nations [cf. Mt 28:19]. In the Markan Appendix, it is to preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Paul relates the existence of Apostles to a Mission given by the Risen Christ in His appearances [cf. 1 Co 15:8-9; Ga 1:16]. In Jn the significant command of the Risen Lord is the briefest: yet, the formulation has been recast, for the paradigm of the Apostolic Mission is **the Son's Personal relationship to the Father**, which is a Johannine theological theme. This may be compared to a similar sounding expression of Jesus' Mission from the Father: **As** You, father, sent Me into the world, **so** I send them into the world! [cf. Jn 17:18].

[b] The unique "in-spiration" of the **Holy Spirit** [v. 22] is noted in other accounts of the Risen Lord. In Mt [18:19], the Holy Spirit is incorporated in what has come to be accepted as a relatively late baptismal formula, one of the few NT texts where all three Persons of the Trinity are found in the same line: Baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Lk [24:49] has Jesus saying: I am sending the Promise of My Father upon you - which is the equivalent of the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Father's Promise of His special Gift: [cf. Ac 1:4-5]. This is how the Pentecost scene was prepared. In Jesus' three sayings [cf. Jn 20:21-23], the mention of the Gift of the Holy Spirit is the one most intimately related to the Johannine theological dialogue about **the purpose of Jesus' Ascension** [v. 17].

[c] **The Power to Forgive Sin** - there is this tendency in the other gospels to specify the general mission of the disciples: for Lk, it is the preaching of forgiveness; in Mt, it is to baptize; in Mk, it is to preach and to baptize. Here, in Jn,

the element of specification is associated with Mercy. Some would say that Jn 20:23 is to Lk 24:47 - what Mk 16:16 is to Mt 28:19.

In Summary: This verse 21 seems to be an adaptation to the general theology of Jn's Gospel.

4.] The Appearance to Thomas:

[a] The substance of the Thomas story is intimately related to the earlier appearance to the disciples. The Thomas story does dramatize a theme of doubt that circulated among the disciples. No other Gospel account pays such close attention to the attitude of any individual Apostle toward the Risen Jesus. Thomas has come down to us as the personification of the attitude of doubt that would often greet the news of the Risen Lord.

[b] There is a clear indication that the Disciples were startled at the sudden appearance of the Risen Jesus [cf. Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19] - they supposed they saw a spirit. Jesus' reference to seeing His hands and feet [cf. Lk 24:39] responds to this. The theme of disbelief continues [Lk 24:41; Mk 16:14; Mt 28:17]. John alone has no specific reference to doubt in the narrative, yet He does show them His hands and His side. Thomas' state of doubt provides an apologetic means to emphasize the tangible character of Jesus' body [cf. also Lk 24:41-43]. Thomas' doubt is something like Magdalen's failure to recognize the Risen Jesus.

[c] The dramatizing of the apostolic doubt provides three new elements in John:

- do not persist in disbelief - become believers!
- Thomas' sublime confession: My Lord and my God!
- the Beatitude: Blessed are they who have not seen, but believe!

All three reflect themes very important to John - the Apostles were often challenged regarding their faith: O you of little faith, why did you doubt? [cf. Mt 14:31]. The confession in v. 28 provides a clear cut theological purpose: if Thomas is the spokesperson of apostolic doubt, John so arranges it that Thomas' ultimate expression is full Christian faith. There is a highly developed Christology in this profession of faith, one that belongs to the later strata of NT thought. Thomas is the ideal to be used as a "Model of the Church" [cf. Jn 11:16; 14:5] - but, he is given the glory of a sublime profession of faith.

6. Further Theological Reflections

a. The Appearance to the Disciples [20:19-20]

1.] For some interpreters [like St. Thomas Aquinas] the Risen Body of Christ was endowed with praeter-natural qualities, the ability to pass through closed doors - and yet, He was tangible, corporal - Jesus showed them His hands and side. There is a differing size of the wounds: the nails would allow a finger investigation, whereas the wound in the side is examined by a whole hand. There is great emphasis on the reality of Christ's risen body.

2.] The significance of the emphasis on the wounds is that they clearly establish a continuity between the resurrection and the crucifixion. The risen Jesus standing here is the Crucified Jesus, and how they are able to grasp with some clarity the results of His being "raised up." Thus, there is great joy among the disciples.

3.] Those to whom Jesus appears are called "disciples" by Jn - the usual interpretation of this would be to the "Eleven", the 12, minus Judas who was gone. This is a common factor in the various Gospel accounts [cf. Lk 24:33; Mt 28:16; Mk 16:14]. There could have been others present, as in this reading: the 11 gathered together, and those who were with them - plus, perhaps, the disciples from Emmaus. However, the tradition has always emphasized the Apostles and the words that Jesus spoke to them This is noted specifically by Paul: Jesus appeared to Cephas and then to the 12. [cf. 1 Co 15:5].

4.] Some interpret this rather vague sounding "'disciples'" as indicative of Jn's desire to specify the "11, or the 12." However, elsewhere Jn does mention the Twelve [cf. 6:67, 70] without disapproval - but, there is no reason to think that Jn did not accept the importance of the 12 and the respect due to them - noted throughout the NT, notwithstanding their weaknesses. Another work of the Johannine school, Revelations [21:14] notes that the foundations of the heavenly wall are based on the 12. Jn does not demote the 12, but rather emphasizes the disciples as representatives of all Christians who would believe in Jesus on the word of the 12. It is hard to discern in Jn when he speaks of the intimate companions of Jesus in their historical role and when he denotes them more as symbols. In 6:66, f., the 12 are clearly distinguished from the "disciples" and a very special attachment to Jesus is expected of them. At the Last Supper, the disciples present are clearly the 12 - and then later, Jesus seems to have a wider audience in mind.

5.] One of the challenges in biblical studies is to strive to discern the intention of the author. Some believe that "disciples" here would be a subtlety on the part of the author to represent a wider audience who would be the recipients of

the Apostolic Mission [v. 21] and of the Holy Spirit [v. 22]. However, the power to forgive sins is more restrictive, in the usual interpretation of these lines. Jn has presented the Apostolic Mission also in terms of Jesus' Filial relationship, which all the baptized, in differing ways, are called to emulate and live: **as** the Father has loved, sent Me, **so** now I love, send you [cf. Jn 15:9; 20:21]. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is meant for all Christians as is some share in the Apostolic Mission. v. 22 on the forgiveness of sins is the evangelist's addition. The power of the keys is reserved to the Apostolic College and ordained ministry.

6.] Jesus offers His own peace and joy to disciples of all the centuries. As in the appearances of the Angel of the Lord, this OT formula reassures the audience that they have nothing to fear. Jesus' gift of peace is the fulfillment of the words spoken in His Last Discourse [cf. Jn 14:27, f.] - Peace is Jesus' farewell. This is His gift - He does not give it as the world does, so our hearts should not be troubled nor fearful. When the disciples were fearful at the Last Supper, Jesus assured them that His parting gift of peace would be profound. In the Resurrection He has come back to them and so He grants His peace in the Holy Spirit - they have the enduring presence of Jesus and **the gift of divine Filiation that is the ultimate foundation of all peace.**

[7] The rejoicing of the disciples is to be understood as the fulfillment of a promise uttered at His Last Discourse. In 16:21-22, Jesus compared the situation [and His own] to a woman in labor, suffering real pain, but is rewarded with joy at the birth of her child. **Peace** and **Joy** are the marks of the eschatological period when God's intervention would have brought about harmony in human life and in the world. Jn sees this realized as Jesus returns to pour forth His Spirit upon humanity. In Rv 19:7; 21:1-4 there are associated eschatological peace and joy with a sense of the divine presence with the Parousia.

b. The Apostolic Mission and the Gift of the Spirit [20:21-22]

1.] Jn joins the common Gospel tradition that the Risen Jesus constituted Apostles by entrusting a salvific mission to those to whom He appeared. The special Johannine contribution to this Mission is that the Father's sending of the Son serves both as the model and the ground for the Son's sending of the disciples. Their Mission is to continue the Son's Mission - this requires the Son's presence during this Mission, just as the Father was present throughout the Son's earthly Mission. Jesus states: whoever sees Me, sees the One who sent Me [cf. 12:45]. The disciples must now manifest the presence of Jesus so that whoever sees the disciples is seeing Jesus Who sent them. As it is phrased in 13:20: whoever welcomes anyone I

send, welcomes Me - and whoever welcomes Me, welcomes Him Who sent me [cf. 13:20]. This is all possible through the Gift of the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father sends in Jesus' Name [cf. 14:26] and Whom Jesus Himself sends [15:26].

2.] Unlike the themes of peace and joy [cf. vv. 19, 20], the theme of the Apostolic Mission [v. 21] picks up a motif that was already heard in the Last Discourse [cf. Jn 17:17-19]. Jesus prayed for His own who were to remain behind in the world: Consecrate them in the truth - **as** You sent Me, **so** I sent them into the world. And it is for them that I consecrate Myself, in order that they, too, may be consecrated in truth. There is a relationship between the consecrating, or making holy, of the disciples and their Mission. Before they can be sent, they must be remade through the truth - i.e., through the revealing word of Jesus and also, of course, through the Spirit of Truth, who is the Holy Spirit. There is a close relation between the Mission of the Disciples [v. 21] and the giving of the Holy Spirit [v. 22] - for, it is the spirit WHO consecrates them, or makes them holy so that, consecrated as Jesus was, they can be sent as Jesus was sent.

3.] Reflection on the Paraclete passages of the Priestly Prayer of Farewell carries the relationship between the Apostolic Mission and the Holy Spirit even further. Jesus stated that His going away would make it possible for the Paraclete to be sent to the disciples [16:7;14:26; 15:26]. This sending of the Paraclete Whom they receive will bear witness [15:26, f.]. In 14:7 we heard that the Paraclete is the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive; but now Jesus says to the Disciples: Receive the Holy Spirit, and then sends them out on the Apostolic Mission. Their Mission, which is that of Jesus Himself, brings an offer of life and salvation to those who believe [6:39, f., 57] because they have received the Spirit who begets life [3:5, f.] and in turn can give this Spirit to others who wish to become disciples of Jesus.

4.] The breathing forth of the Holy Spirit is the high-point of the post-resurrectional activity of Jesus. In several ways, the earlier part of this chapter has prepared us for this. The association of the Resurrection and the Ascension [v 17] and the implication that through Jesus' return to the Father, would mean that humanity becomes the children of God, which points to the work of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps even the reference to Jesus' side [v. 20] was meant as a reminder to the reader of the blood and water that flowed from the side, symbolizing also the Spirit.

5.] Before saying the words: 'Receive a holy Spirit'. Jesus "breathes" on His disciples. This is reminiscent of the first creation scene: the Lord formed Adam

out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [cf. Gn 2:7].

[a] This same verb is used again in Ws 15:11, which rephrases the creation account: the One Who fashioned him, breathed into him a living spirit. Symbolically, Jn is proclaiming that just as in the first creation God breathed a living spirit into the first human being, so now in the moment of the New Creation. Jesus breathes His own Holy Spirit into the disciples giving them eternal life.

[b] The Gospel opened [cf. 1:1-5] with the theme of Creation - and now it returns at the end of the Gospel. In the impressive vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones [cf. Ezk 37:3-5]. the prophet was addressed by God as “the son of man” and was told to prophesy: ‘Hear the word of the Lord ... I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.’ Now another Son of Man, Himself fresh from the tomb, speaks as the Risen Lord and causes **the breath of eternal life** to enter those who hear His word.

[c] In the secondary baptismal symbolism [cf. Jn 3:5] the readers are told that by water and Spirit they are begotten as God’s children. The preset scene serves as **the Baptism of Jesus’ immediate disciples and a pledge of divine begetting to all believer of a future period represented by disciples**. All are now truly brothers and can call God, His Father, ‘our’ Father [cf. 20:17]. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate climax of the personal relations between Jesus and His disciples.

6.] Some find a challenge in that Jn 20 seems to be Easter night - while Ac 2 seems to be 50 days later. A variety of interpretations have been fostered:

- Some would reduce this “giving” of the Spirit on Easter night to a mere symbolism. Some others make a qualitative distinction:

- as John Chrysostom: the Gift of the Spirit in Jn 20:22 is the forgiveness of sins - while the Gift of the Spirit in Ac 2 is the power to work miracles and raise the dead.

- The Easter Gift of the Spirit is concerned with the individual and his/her relationship to the Heavenly Father - while the Pentecostal Gift of the Spirit is more ecclesial or missionary.

- A few propose that the Easter Gift had the limited function of enabling the disciples to recognize and confess the Risen Lord, a view based on 1 Co 12:3” no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.

- Another group of scholars make a quantitative distinction: the Gift of the Spirit on Easter is transitional, anticipatory - while the Gift of Pentecost is complete and definitive.

7.] And still others approach the problem differently: they insist that there is nothing in Jn's Gospel that would cause one to think of the Gift of the Spirit on Easter as provisional, partial - this is rather **the total fulfillment** of earlier passages that promised the giving of the Spirit, the First Gift to those who believe. The Gift in Jn 20:22 is not merely personal, or individual - it is so closely related to the missioning of the disciples into the world. It is a poor method to seek to harmonize Jn 20 and Ac 2 in this way: there is no evidence that either composition was making any allusion to the other. The better conclusion would be that both compositions are describing the same event in characteristic terminology: the one Gift of the Holy Spirit to His followers by the Risen and Ascended Lord. The descriptions are different, reflecting the diverse theological interests of the respective authors.

a.] There is no insurmountable obstacle to the fact that Jn and Ac assign a different date to the Gift of the Spirit. Jn's dating can be somewhat "artificial" - further, if Galilee over Jerusalem was the original site for this conferral, then the Apostles were not in Galilee on Easter - but would go there later.

b.] Furthermore, there is much that is symbolic in Ac's choice of Pentecost, for Lk is using the background of the **Sinai Covenant motif** associated with that Fast in his description of the coming of the Spirit. Yet, there is no discounting the possibility that Lk preserves an authentic Christian memory of the first charismatic manifestation of the Spirit in the community on Pentecost.

c.] What is interesting is that both authors place the giving of the Spirit after Jesus has ascended to His Father, even if they have different views of the Ascension. For both of them, the Spirit's task is to take the place of Jesus, to carry on His work and to constitute His presence in the world. Thus Jn 20:22 has been called "**the Johannine Pentecost**" - it is difficult to date it.

c. The Power over Sin [20:23]

<p>1.] The conferral of this power is often compared to Mt 16:19; 18:18:</p> <p><u>Mt</u></p> <p>"Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven..."</p>	<p><u>Jn</u></p> <p>"If you forgive men;s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you hold them, they are held fast."</p>
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a.] The comparison is more obvious when Jn's passive tenses and MT's reference to "heaven" are two circumlocutions for describing God's action.

In binding and loosing we note a Hebrew/Aramaic formula well attested to in later rabbinical writings.

b.] In Mt 16:19 is in the context of giving the keys to Peter. The whole scene echoes the thought of Is 22:22 where the key of the palace is the symbol of royal authority: the key of the house of David he will open and no one will shut. "Open" thus is release, forgive - "shut" means to "hold in".

2.] The setting varies in the two Gospels: in Jn, it takes place after Jesus' Resurrection. In Mt 18, the saying is directed to the group of disciples and is in the context of handling disputes within the community. Mt's material seems to reflect well organized communities, already functioning with some difficulties. Mt 16 is part of a special addition peculiar to Mt - material pertaining to Peter. Thus Mt's locale has no claim for authority and its timing is not all that clear.

3.] In Mt, the Rabbinic formula of binding and loosing that Mt reflects refers most often to the imposition or removal of obligations by an authoritative doctrinal decision. Another less frequent interpretation is the imposing, or removal of a ban of excommunication. However this is read, it seems that Peter is given the authority of chief Rabbi. In Jn, this can only be understood indirectly - only if the person being forgiven has been actually outside of community fellowship.

4.] The precise meaning, extent and exercise of the power to forgive sins has been divisive in Christianity. Jn 20:23 is the key text in this. The Council of Trent condemned the proposal that this power to forgive sins was offered to every believer - for Catholics, this power should be understood as **the Sacrament of Penance**, understood as administered only by the ordained priest [cf. DB ## 1703; 1710]. Today, there are even some Catholic scholars who do not believe that Jn himself attached the sacramental meaning to this verse. The Roman Catholic position has consistently remained, however, that the power conferred in Jn 20:23 concerns the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism and is conferred on a specified group, the Eleven - who then pass it on to others in the ritual of priestly ordination.

5.] This difference in exegesis continues to our day: the Catholic interpretation is based also on the living Tradition. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, instituted by Christ, was understood as being based on this passage. The "disciples" to whom Jesus spoke here in this view, would have been the Eleven - even though this is not always the case.

a.] The Catholic view also comes from a harmonization with other Gospel accounts of the appearance of the Risen Christ to the Eleven. Lk 24:47

has Jesus instruct the Apostles, and those who were with them, that “repentance and the forgiveness of sins” should be preached, proclaimed in His Name, to all nations. Mk 16:15 has the instruction simply to preach the Gospel. The relation of forgiveness to Baptism is drawn in part from an analogy with Mt 28:19 where Jesus tells his disciples to baptize all nations - and from Mk 16:16 where the two-fold effect of the Mission to baptize is specified: He who believes and is baptized will be saved - but, he who does not will be condemned.

b.] In Jn there is not much internal support to show that this v. 23 is a power to preach the forgiveness of actual sins. That emphasis is just logical in Lk - and Ac shows how this preaching was done. There is better internal evidence in Jn for relating the forgiveness of sins to admission to Baptism.

c.] There is much symbolism touching on the question of sin. It is John the Baptist who proclaims that Jesus is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world [cf. 1:29]. The opening of the blind man’s eyes, is also a symbol of baptism, an “illumination.” Hence, the Church Fathers of the first three centuries rather consistently understood Jn 20:23 in reference to baptismal forgiveness as is in the creedal formula, “one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins”.

6.] Nevertheless, by the same token, no one can argue from Jn to say that the evangelist meant to refer exclusively to the power of admitting, or not admitting applicants to Baptism. What may be remotely evocative of Baptism is the idea that the giving of the Spirit to the disciples is in a way, their Baptism. This verse 23 needs to be read in the context of the major themes of Johannine theology:

a.] Verse 23 is related to v. 21: the Disciples can forgive and hold sins because now the Risen Jesus has sent them, **AS** the Father sends Him. Thus, this has to be interpreted in the light of Jesus’ own attitude toward sin. In Jn 9:39-41, Jesus says that He came into the world for judgment: to enable some to see and to cause blindness in others. Deliberate blindness is the choice to remain in sin - the desire to sin is wanting to be delivered from sin. J 3:17-21 describes a separation of those lives that are good from those that are evil. This discriminatory process is related to the purpose for which God sent the Son into the world. And so, if the disciples are sent just as the Son was sent, they must continue the discriminatory judgment between good and evil.

b.] It has been noted that Jn 20:21 echoes 17:18 which also treats of the disciples’ being sent into the world, and the context of this latter passage shows that the presence of the disciples causes hate on the part of some in the world.

However, this leads others to believe [17:20]. We see, then, that Johannine realized eschatology and mitigated dualism offer background for the understanding of the forgiveness and binding of sin in 20:23. The disciples, both by deed and word cause human beings to judge themselves: some come to the light and receive forgiveness-some turn away and are hardened in sin.

7.] Verse 23 should be related to v. 22 - the disciples can forgive other persons' sins because Jesus has breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. In 1 Jn 2:1-2 some response may be given as to how the power to forgive sin continues after Jesus' departure: Jesus Christ is our Intercessor before the Father, and is an expiation for our sins, and for those of the whole world.

a.] The Gospel is more concerned with the application of forgiveness on earth, and this is accomplished in and through the Spirit that Jesus has sent. If we call upon the Johannine Paraclete passages, then the giving of the Paraclete/Spirit reinforces the idea that the disciples are the organ of discriminatory judgment in the world. Working through the disciples, the Paraclete like Jesus before Him, divides humanity into two groups: those who believe and can recognize and receive Him - and the world which does not recognize or see Him, and which He will prove wrong [cf. 14:17; 16:8].

b.] If we turn from the Paraclete passages to more general Johannine ideas about the Spirit, we may relate that the forgiveness of sins to the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit that cleanses human beings and begets them to new life [cf. Jn 1:33; 3:5].

c.] In 20:22, the primary symbolism of the giving of the Spirit concerns the New Creation, a creation that wipes out evil, for the Holy Spirit consecrates human beings and gives them the power to make others holy in turn. In Jn 20:22-23, the juxtaposition of the giving of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins has been traditionally interpreted in the Catholic Church as the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

8.] Verse 23 should also be related to what follows in Jn 20, especially v. 29: the Thomas story supplies a transition from the eyewitness disciples to the many Christians who believe without having seen. Just as the Holy Spirit, breathed upon the disciples by Jesus, is given in turn through Baptism to all believers, so the power to forgive sins is meant to affect all believers. Along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the role of forgiveness in the life of Christians of a later time is noted in 1 Jn 1:7-9. When believers honestly acknowledge that they continue to sin:

He forgives us, cleanses us from all that is wrong. Some sins God does forgive directly - Christians also have some role in the forgiveness of others' sins, at least through **prayer** [cf. 1 Jn 5:16, f.], **fraternal correction**. There is encouragement to pray for the forgiveness of sins that are not deadly. However, it is certain in the Church's Tradition that some within the Johannine community were vested with power over sin.

9.] In summary, there are manifestations in Jn of a broader power of forgiveness within the community. This is the power to identify, negate, isolate, repel evil. This is a power given to the community, entrusted to its prayer, and penance: as some devils can only be expelled through prayer and fasting. This is not only declaratory, but in some way is "effective" - it challenges those who refuse to believe. Jn does not tell us precisely how this power was exercised. In the course of time this power has had many manifestations as various Christian groups specify both the manner and the agency of its exercise. Jn 20:23 has been accepted in the Church as a proof of the power to forgive sin - but, the precise manner of this forgiveness has not been spelled out.

10.] The New Catechism treats often of Jn 20:23:
"...The Apostle's Creed associates faith in the forgiveness of sins not only with faith in the Holy Spirit, but also with faith in the Church and in the communion of saints. It was when he gave the Holy Spirit to his apostles that the risen Christ conferred on them his own divine power to forgive sins. 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' [cf. Jn 20:22-23] ¹¹.

"...Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself: 'The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' and exercises this power: 'Your sins are forgiven'. Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name...[cf. Jn 20:21-23] ¹².

"...Since Christ entrusted to his apostle the ministry of reconciliation [cf. Jn 20:23; 2 Co 5:8], bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops' collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins, 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... ¹³.

¹¹cf. CCC # 976.

¹²cf. CCC # 1441.

¹³cf. CCC # 1461.

d. Thomas is converted through contact with the Sacred Stigmata from Disbelief to Belief:

1.] Thomas does not accept the word of the other believing Apostles - he shows his "true colors", as in the Lazarus story [cf. 11:14-16]: Jesus notes that He was happy for Thomas' sake that He was not there so that he would come to the faith. Thomas is still unimpressed with Jesus' knowledge at a distance. He does agree to accompany the other Apostles to go up to Judea with Jesus, insisting that they are going to their deaths.

2.] In demanding that he personally be able to examine Jesus' risen body, Thomas asks more than the other Apostles were given, or needed. Jesus simply "showed" them His hands and side [v. 20] - and they rejoiced at this sight of the Lord. But Thomas needs more - if he is not able to see, he states that he will never believe [v. 25]. The writer clearly disapproves of Thomas' attitude - he represents what has already been rejected by Jesus: unless you people can see signs and wonders, you never believe [cf. Jn 4:48]. The 4th Gospel consistently finds it reprehensible any concentration on seeing the miraculous [cf. 2:23-25]. There are two attitudes regarding the appearance of the Risen Jesus: the faithful disciples simply see, believe and are led to confess Jesus as Lord - whereas Thomas is more interested in probing the miraculous as such.

3.] Thomas is to be reprehended on two accounts: for refusing to accept the apostolic word; and for being taken up with proving the miraculous. Jesus' words actually only challenge Thomas on the second account. Thomas, despite his tendencies, is capable of being led to real faith. In fact, verses 26-28 describe this progression in belief. It almost seems as though Jesus is somewhat sarcastic in offering a rather crass demonstration of the miraculous that the doubting apostle demanded. Eventually, Thomas comes to belief.

4.] Certainly, this is Jn's intention: he never would have thought that the Apostle's faith was sufficient if he had taken up the Lord's invitation and would never placed in Thomas' heart the magnificent confession of v. 28. Thomas did not persist in disbelief [cf. v. 27], but became a believer in the Risen Lord. This made him eligible to be included among the others who had seen and believed. Jn's Gospel makes it clear that Jesus' Body could be touched - this was not the primary emphasis of the passage, even though some aspects of the early Church tradition did refer to this "touching" of the Risen Lord. St. Ignatius of Antioch shows that this touching led all the Apostles to belief. There is no real support for all this touching in Jn's Gospel -

nor, even in 1 Jn 1:1 which speaks of the One they had looked at, and felt with their own hands. The reference there is much more to the reality of the Incarnate Eternal Word, who had become “flesh”. The passage in the Epistle has nothing to do with the Risen Lord.

5.] Whether or not this was Jn’s specific purpose, he has indeed given us four Models of Paschal Faith for the Church:

- the Beloved Disciple comes to faith after seeing just the burial wrappings - but, not the Risen Lord Himself;
- Mary Magdalene sees Jesus but does not recognize Him until He calls her by name;
- the disciples see Him and believe Him, strengthened by one another;
- Thomas also sees Him, gradually comes to paschal faith.

All four of these personal “Models of the Church” are examples of “seeing is indeed believing”. Jn praises those who will come to belief, without seeing Him other than in the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine.

e. Thomas’ Confession of Faith [v. 28]:

1.] The ultimate Apostolic Profession, Proclamation of Faith in this scene is given to the doubting Thomas: **My Lord and my God!** This same Jesus, was first “raised up” on the Cross, and now in the Resurrection, and Ascension. He receives from His Father that Glory He had with Him before the world existed [17:5]. Thomas was carried beyond the miraculous and comes to understand what all this marvel means about Jesus and His sublime Plan of His Father. Jesus is happy with Thomas’ response: You have believed!

2.] This coupling of “Lord and God” is noted in pagan religious literature - Domitian might have been reigning when Jn was being written - and it may be that the Book of Revelations was written against this pagan emperor. Others, though, maintain that Jn’s source is the OT - this confession of Faith would be like **Jo-EL, ELI-JAH : Elohim is Yahweh**, and vice versa. It is the combination of the Hebrew names for God: **Yahweh [kyrios]** and **Elohim [theos]** . Ps 35:23 notes: My God and my Lord!

3.] This is the supreme Christological pronouncement in the 4th Gospel: beginning in Jn 1, there are many titles given to Jesus: Lamb, and then Rabbi, Messiah, Prophet, King, Son of God. After the Resurrection, Magdalene calls Jesus “**Lord**” as do the disciples.

a.] But the doubting Thomas makes it very clear that one may address Jesus in the way the pious Jew would address Yahweh. The will of the Father is here fulfilled: "... that all may honor the Son **JUST AS** they honor the Father [cf. 5:23]. Jesus' own prophecy is fulfilled: When you lift up the Son of Man, you will realize that I AM! [8:28]. In this sublime Profession of Faith Jesus is honored as God. Often "God" as applied to Jesus in the NT is more in a liturgical, or cultic context - the response of praise to the God Who has revealed Himself in Jesus.

b.] So, Thomas' profession brings together the Prologue formula: "**The Word was God!**" So, Jn 20:19, ff., might be evocative of a liturgy the first day of the week of Glorification. Thomas pronounces his doxology in behalf of all believers of all time.

c.] There is a community acclamation in Rv 4:11 when the Elders fall before the throne of God, singing: Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...! In Rv, the acclamation is for the Father - in Jn it is for the Son - and the Father and the Son are "one". [cf. 10:30].

d.] **Thomas' are the last words spoken by a Disciple in the for gospels** - nothing more sublime could be said of Jesus Christ.

4.] This is a Covenantal Confession of Faith. In 20:17, the promise was that after Jesus' Ascension to God, He would become Father to all disciples who would be begotten by the Spirit, and also would in a special way become the God of a People bound to Him in the **New Covenant**. Thomas' words to Jesus are the **vox populi** ratifying the Covenant of Mercy that the Father has initiated in Jesus. How 2:25 promised a people that previously was **Lo-ammi**, no people at all. Now this people has said: **You are my God!** This confession has been combined with the baptismal profession: **Jesus is Lord!** Such professions can only be made when the Spirit has been poured out [cf. 1 Co 12:3].

f. **The Beatitude: Blessed are they Who have not seen, but have Believed! [v. 29]**

1.] The "**New Covenant**" is the last aspect to be discussed here - the "Old Covenant: was that established on Sinai, and written on permanent tablets of stone. that "old covenant" was handed down by those who had not seen, yet had believed all through the distant generations following the desert People. In the old Rabbinical tradition, no one could be dearer to God than the one who had not seen, and yet had accepted the words of Sinai. Hence, the Johannine Jesus seems to tap

into this Rabbinical tradition - Jesus praises the majority of the faithful over the long centuries of the Church who have never seen Him. Yet, through the Holy Spirit they can proclaim Him as their "Lord and God." He assures these followers of the ages that He foresees their situation and counts them as sharing in the joy of His resurrection.

2.] Verse 29 comes as the Conclusion: after the climax of the profession by the Apostle Thomas, does the Gospel now turn toward the Time of the Church. Up to this point, the emphasis has been that there is only one type of true faith: that which arose from the visible presence of Jesus in the Spirit. Now, a new type of Paschal, Ecclesial faith arises. One is called to believe even if the "seeing" is only sharing in the Eucharist. The Gospel is here describing the initial stages of the faith of the Church. The Johannine Jesus addresses the Church only indirectly, through the Apostles who shared His stage of the public life "from the beginning". The reactions they experienced are now handed on to the Church. Jesus Himself shifts the attention from the close-knit Apostles to the entire Church of the ages. The Mission of the Apostles is to continue that of Jesus [v. 21] - the fruit of that mission will be blessed for believing without seeing.

3.] Verse 29 offers a clear contrast: that of seeing Jesus, and that of not seeing Him. There is no mention of "touching". Thomas is no longer the doubter of v. 25 but the believer of v. 28. He is one who has now seen, and had believed, and thus is blessed with the joy of the resurrection. Jesus has come back to see His faithful ones after the catharsis of His death, and gives them this joy. Those who do not see, who did not live in this privileged time - have no special privilege: blessed are the many generations who have not seen. For Lk, the two disciples of Emmaus are the situation, Models of the Church: they do not recognize Jesus "in the flesh", but **only in the breaking of the bread**. God will bless those who were not privileged to see Jesus to recognize Him in their Paschal Faith, Hope, Love and Joy. St. Peter picks up on this: without having seen Him, you love Him; though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible joy.

4.] In Jn's theology there is no dichotomy between "sign" and "word" - both reveal and the word helps to understand the sign. Jn's attitude toward signs is not simplistic, but rather complex. The believer is not meant to be overly impressed by the marvelous. Faith is adequate when it sees a heavenly reality behind the miraculous, namely what Jesus reveals about God and Himself. As long as Jesus stood among humanity in bodily appearance, one would come through faith by contact - either direct or indirect - with Him. We are now in the era of the Holy Spirit - the era of signs, appearances, has passed. Since the Apostles did indeed "see" Jesus,

and transcribed their experiences under divine revelation we have faith. The “signs” have been narrated so that people may believe - this is not a total rejection of the validity, value of signs.

5.] The last words in the original Johannine Gospel [accepting the theory of Jn 21 being a “later tradition”- are the words of Jesus, proclaiming the Beatitude of Happy re they who have believed, even though they have not seen. Other accounts mention Jesus’ departure from the disciples [cf. Lk 24:51; Ac 1:9; Mk 16:19]. For Jn, Jesus remains present in the Paraclete/Spirit Who is to be with the disciples forever [cf. Jn 16:19] His last words bear the mark of the timeless Word spoken before the world was created.

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Conclusion

[1] The 4th Gospel is “universal” in that it stands with humanity’s perennial and pervasive quest for God. The longing for truth, life, the way, light - are among the many symbols of this Gospel that are truly expressive of universal human search for the Transcendent. This is Jn’s Christology: the mission of Jesus is to reveal God’s saving love for all the world and to give it eternal life. Jesus remains the ultimate of ultimates. The Gospel is missionary - the final word to the community is that the disciples of Jesus are “sent”, as He was - sent to the whole world, to bring life. Jn’s language “smacks” of dualism noting the sharp cleavage between belief and unbelief, the world open to light, and that enshrouded in darkness - truth and lies. The Gospel urges commitment to this world. The Gospel has an unabashedly confessional character.

[2] Jn is sometimes called an “internal” document - written for a specific community, and not for outsiders. Yet, it is not “sectarian.” No NT text is written to persuade the unbeliever. The Gospel is **a statement for a believing community**. Jn writes to **freshen his own Christians’ faith in Jesus** [cf. 20:30-31] - to give them a perspective on the cosmic dimensions of Jesus’ Name. Jn can thus emphasize the total necessity of faith for salvation and delineate the distinctiveness of the believer over against the non-believing world. Jn, however, does use expressions that **offer an opening to the Greek world**.

[3] Jn thus hands on the missionary impulse found in other NT writings. The brief Letters attributed to Jn seem to be much later - and strive to interpret the Gospel.

There are some “universal” expressions found in these: as Jesus is the expiation not only for our sins, but for those of the whole world [cf. 1 Jn 2:2]. He is indeed the Savior of the world [cf. 1 Jn 4:14]. Sometimes the “mission” seems to be that of combating heresy within the Church. The focus of the epistles is to maintain the tradition and to stifle errors in doctrine. There was an enormous struggle to categorize opposing factions within the Church.

[4] Fr. Raymond Brown noted that the **Gospel of Jn reflects the community’s dealings with outsiders - whereas the Letters concern insiders**. The Epistles seem so limited in scope that it would be difficult to discern from them alone the precise state of the mission truly was. The Johannine Letters, like some other NT writings, speak very little about “mission.” The Christology of the Epistles is truly universal, but the problems addressed are indeed internal matters. This could never imply that the Johannine Church had lost its missionary perspective so pronounced in the Gospel. Churches - like those addressed by Paul - could retain their universal missionary scope, and still be nearly torn asunder by internal problems. **Johannine Missionary theology is best denoted in the Gospel**. This literary genre enabled the author to present full vision of Christian Mission and the call of all to share this with the world.

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III. THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE APOSTOLIC MISSION: Lk & Ac

[cf. StuhlmueLLer, CP & D. Senior, CP]

...And you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth... [cf. Ac 1:8]

Presentation:

[1] For some interpreters, the Gospel and the Ac, may be the clearest presentation of the church’s universal mission in all of the NT. Lk tightly binds together the story of the early community with the story of Jesus’ life. His purpose in this is to show the unity between Jesus’ own mission and that of the Church. Scholars note a kind of trptych in Lk: on one panel, the OT - in the larger central panel, the Person of Jesus - in the smaller third, panel, the life of the Church.

[2] Lk stresses the **prophetic** character of Jesus - along with confrontations with justice and peace issues. These help some aspects of Liberation Theology in harmony with the word of God. Lk's Gospel is clearly a theological interpretation - and remains the best data that has survived regarding the life and growth of the early Church.

[3] Lk's Prologues [cf. 1:1-4; Ac 1:1] show this two-fold interest of the author. Theophilus - a real, or fictitious personality, is offered a review of the events that form the beginnings of the Christian "experience." Lk uses Mk plus a collection of Jesus' sayings that were handed on - a combination of sources like those of Mt. But, Lk offers his own unique portrayal - he also adds significant material found only in his Gospel. He strives to present an "orderly account"- but this does not imply a strictly "literal" history. The "order" in Lk's minds is his theological grasp of Jesus and His mission. This is not just a recording of past events - but the **proclamation** of a **continuing presence** among the "little ones." Most likely, Lk has found material from a variety of sources and traditions and gives this material his own shape and focus, illustrating his "theology of history."

[4] Lk's Theological History is intended to offer a certain perspective and strength to readers. The relationship of Jesus to His own People is clear -and it is in this context, that the universal mission comes to the fore. Lk's reflections on **the dynamic kingdom ministry of Jesus and on the expanding, intensifying Apostolic Mission** is one of the 3d Gospel's prime interests. His effort is to fortify the Universal Apostolic Mission of the community.

[5] It is difficult to find precision regarding the situation of the Lukan Church. The Gospel and Ac probably saw the light of day after the year 80 - and probably had in mind a largely Gentile Church. The community is undergoing an "**ordeal**", persecution - hostility from both Jews and non-believers in the pursuit of its apostolic Mission. Lk wants to show that the Apostolic Mission is not contrary to the work of God in Israel's history - neither is it incompatible with authentic citizenship in the civil empire. Lk is both positive and bold: he urges fellow believers to move out into the broader world, with that vigorous and courageous spirit that inspired Jesus and the early Church - a perennial model for religious.

1. Lk's Mission Theology: the Intimate Bond between Jesus and the Church

a. Lk sets his Mission Theology in the backdrop of the life of Jesus and the story of the Church. There is an intimate link between the two. In the Resurrection

story [cf. 24:44-49; echoes in Ac 1:3-8] there is a synthesis of Lukan theology - moving the reader forward to Ac.

- b. The passage is the last of a series of three incidents closing the Gospel:
 - the discovery of the empty tomb [24:13-35];
 - the appearance of the Risen Lord to the disciples on the road to Emmaus [24:1-12];
 - the appearance to the Jerusalem community [24:36-49].

All three incidents happen “on the first day of the week” - all are imbued with Lk’s Jerusalem obsession - and the triumphant Ascension story. What Jesus leaves to his community is the instruction on the nature and scope of the Apostolic Mission [cf. 24:44-49].

1.] The Risen Christ is talking about a ministry that the community will carry out only after He returns to His Father. Lk understands the development of the Mission of Christ and the Church. Jesus of Nazareth, during His earthly sojourn, did not as yet inaugurate a full blown mission.

a.] The nature of the Church’s universal Apostolic Mission became clear only in the post-Easter experience. In Ac, Lk shows that this was not an immediate, instantaneous conviction on the part of the community. Only gradually - and with difficulty, and through the progressive power of the Holy Spirit, did the Church come to understand his call “to the ends of the earth.”

b.] Lk grounds that Apostolic Mission in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Risen Christ is the vindication of the Gospel story. In triumph, He comes to **renew table fellowship** with His “own” - as in Mt [28:16-20] the commissioning of the Church comes from the authority of Jesus Christ Himself, and will be followed “in His Name”. [cf. Lk 24:47; Mt 28:19]. The Gospel is the paradigm for the community’s mission - Jesus’ prophetic message, His call for repentance and conversion, His powerful healing and exorcism, His limitless compassion, and efforts to form community: all of these shape the Church’s Mission. There are great parallels between Jesus’ life and that of His Church.

2.] The Risen Christ speaks of the Scriptures being fulfilled in Him: everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled [cf. Lk 24:27, 44]. This is also important to Mt. The Person and Mission of Jesus fulfills God’s Plan of salvation, promised in the OT. The leaders of Israel rejected Jesus and the Mission of His Church - but, the bridge to the People is

alive. The **fulfillment of the Scriptures** reaches also to the life of the community. All the elements of vv. 46-48 are included:

- the death and Resurrection of Jesus;
- the universal proclamation of conversion and forgiveness;
- the Gift of the Spirit to the witnessing community.

God's plan will be fulfilled - all flesh will see the salvation of God [cf. 3:6]. The correspondence between the promises of Scripture and the universal Apostolic Mission is not easily grasped. Only the power of the Risen Christ and the direction of the Spirit enable the leaders to come to grips with this mystery.

3.] Lk places the call to the universal Apostolic Mission in the context of the Resurrection. This puts the 3rd Gospel in harmony with the rest of the NT: Jesus' Paschal Mystery is the climax. The "journey" theme [cf. 9:51] goes all the way to the triumph of Palm Sunday, entering Jerusalem [19:41] serves to build momentum. The resistance Jesus encounters [cf. 4:28, f.; 13:31-35] is part of this from beginning to end. Jesus' suffering and eventual vindication in the Resurrection are a pattern of Lk's historical style. The prophets suffered the same [13:34] The lowly ones of Israel bore suffering as their destiny - but, the power of God would eventually vindicate them all. So, it was "necessary" for Christ to endure these things and thus enter into his glory [24:26] This the community's destiny as well:

- the apostles imprisonment offers opportunities for preaching [cf. Ac 5:40, ff.];
- the death of Stephen brings the message to Samaria [Ac 8:4, f.] and the Greeks [Ac 11:19, ff.];
- Paul's apostolic "stigmata" [Ac 28:30-31].

4.] Lk's message is a call for **conversion**, a promise of **forgiveness**. There is a transforming power to the Gospel as is evident in Jesus' and the Apostles' Apostolic Mission. Jesus takes away pain, forgives sin, transforms human life. Lk's is a relentless call for full commitment - response needs to be deliberate, open, full [cf. Lk 14:28-33]. Peter speaks for the whole Church repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins [cf. Ac 2:37, f.]. Salvation and its consequences are the theme - Lk constantly reminds his community that salvation is the goal of the Apostolic Mission to the world.

5.] The universal Apostolic Mission **begins in Jerusalem [Lk 24:47] and ends in out-reach to all nations**. Both points of departure and arrival are vital: the world-wide goal has its origin in Jerusalem. The Infancy Narrative begins and ends in the Temple of Jerusalem [cf. Lk 1:9; 2:41, ff.]. The dramatic journey "toward

Jerusalem” dominates the Gospel [cf. Lk 9:51-19:40]. Throughout, Lk’s emphasis is on all post-Easter activity to Jerusalem [cf. Lk 24:49, ff.; Ac 1:4]. The capital city is also a symbol for Lk [cf. 13:33] - and from the holy city flows the Christian community and the Apostolic Mission. Lk takes pains to inter-connect all these mysteries.

6.] Lk pays full homage to the Jewish roots of the new faith - along with the breaking of all boundaries for the Apostolic Mission. Jesus’ own Mission was confined to Israel - but, there are hints at universalism throughout. The whole structure of Ac shows the breaking forth of the Apostolic Mission from Judea and Samaria to the **ends of the earth**. [cf. Ac 1:8]. This is the will of God for Lk - Jesus is carried by the Holy Spirit to initiate the Mission of salvation [cf. Lk 4:14, ff.] Peter and Cornelius, Jew and Gentle, are constantly brought together [cf. Ac 10:34].

7.] The Apostles are called to be “Faithful Witnesses” of these things [cf. Lk 24:48]. The “12” have a unique role in Lk-Ac - they are **the living bond between Jesus and the Apostolic Mission of the Church**. The Apostles are **the constant companions of Jesus** and the privileged observers of His ministry. Perseverance in this companionship is crucial for Lk’s view [cf. Ac 1:21-22] - it is a fragile group, but they are called to be instruments of the Apostolic Mission once they are empowered in the Holy Spirit. Lk does not have enough traditions about the missionary life of the 12 to know many details. However, in Ac Peter and the 12 pick up the Witness role in launching the Apostolic Mission - in the 2nd half of Ac, Paul’s importance is underlined. Paul will dominate from Ac 9:15], a chosen instrument, and predominates especially after Ac 15 - he is the one who more than anyone will bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

8.] Finally, the source that will sustain this “**arduous and difficult**” **Apostolic Mission** is the Holy Spirit [cf. Lk 24:49]. Jesus’ own prophetic Mission opened the age of the Spirit. The Gift of the Spirit is the result of Jesus’ redemptive work [cf. Lk 24:49; Ac 1: 4, f.]. Beginning with the dynamism of Pentecost and throughout Ac. Lk consistently links the ever-broadening scope of the Apostolic Mission to the Holy Spirit.

2. **The Gospel: Jesus and the Universal Apostolic Mission:** the full-blown universality did not begin with Jesus - He remained for the most part in Galilee, Samaria and Judea. Yet, throughout the author is well aware that the Church’s Apostolic Mission is rooted in that of Jesus Lk sees the OT feeding into the Life of Jesus, the font, source and gal then of the Apostolic Mission of the Church

a. **The Universal Scope of the Apostolic Mission**

1.] Even though Jesus never left the “Holy Land”, Lk shows unmistakably the universalism inherent in His Mission. The Cantic of Simeon speaks of “a light for the Gentiles and for glory to the People of Israel” [cf. 2:32]. The opening chapters of Lk tends toward **broad horizons**. The humble birth of a lowly citizen is placed in the back-drop of the chronology of world order [2:1] - the beginning of Jesus’ Mission is related to the rule of Tiberias [3:1]. Lk is suggesting world-wide repercussions.

2.] The universal scope is evident in the introduction to the Baptist’s ministry: all flesh shall see the salvation of God [Lk 3:6]. God’s salvation is recognized by Simeon as the Infant is brought into the temple [2:30]. Paul echoes Is 40:5 at the conclusion of Ac, turning from Jews to the Gentiles: this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles - they will listen! [cf. Ac 28:28]. The community will extend the Apostolic Mission to the ends of the earth with the power from the Holy Spirit

3.] Jesus’ Mission has “**centrifugal**” force noted in the dramatic inaugural scene at Nazareth [Lk 4:16-30] quoting Is [60:1, f.]: the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me - He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, to proclaim a year acceptable to God. The Mission is reaching out to the marginalized: the poor, the captives, the blind. This centrifugal dimension is noted in the difficult passage of verses 22-29: Jesus challenges provincialism. Doctor, heal yourself! There are reminders of Elijah and Elishah ministering not only to Israel, but also to the Gentile widow, and to Naaman the Syrian. Lk manages to inaugurate **Jesus’ Personal Mission with universalist perspectives**.

4.] Jesus ministers solely within Israel - but His “style” knows no horizons. He shares His table with tax collectors and sinners [cf. 5:27-32; 15:1,f.] Lk emphasizes Jesus’ out-reach toward women - a remarkable crossing of social and religious barriers in the patriarchalism of His day. Jesus is open to “official” outsiders, as the Centurion [7:1-10] and the Samaritans. The latter outcast group is a real concern to Jesus. He planned to exercise His Mission there [9:52] - despite their rejection, He will not allow His Apostles to take vengeance on the Samaritans [cf. 9:53-55]. Twice in His Mission, the Samaritans come across as “good” [cf. 10:30-37; 17:11-19]. Jesus reaches out to lepers [cf. 5:12-15] - and care for the poor is a constant theme of His preaching [cf. 16:19-31; 18:18-27].

5.] There is no doubt that Lk is able to connect this expansive dimension of Jesus and the Apostolic Mission eventually taken on by the Church - that moved

beyond the Holy Land. In Ac 10: 38 Peter is about to accept the Gentile, Cornelius, into the community - and he remembers how Jesus went about doing good and healing, and God was with Him. Lk urges the community to appreciate this bond, placing Jesus' Mission along - side the Church's missionary commitment.

b. Continuity with Israel:

1.] While there is a clear under-current of the universal Apostolic Mission, Lk is very careful to root this deeply in the spiritual traditions of his own People. A central concern is the bond between the Synagogue and the Church. Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, of the House of David. The Infancy Narrative is important here - the Angel tells Mary that Jesus will inherit the Throne of His Father, David [cf. 1:32] - the fruit of her womb will be the Son of God [v. 35]. The *Benedictus* takes up the same theme: Christ the Lord is born in the city of David [cf. 2:11] - Simeon is grateful that he has seen the Salvation, the Savior, of all People [2. 30]. The entire environment of the Infancy Narrative is rooted in Israel's hopes. There is a **"gallery", "constellation"** of OT figures: Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the Shepherds: all steeped in the longing for the People of God for Salvation. The Spirit-filled expectancy for the Savior demonstrate Jesus' birth as the beginning of the fulfillment.

2.] The remainder of the Gospel continues this continuity with the sacred history of Israel. Jesus being baptized is God's Son [cf. 3:2] - the genealogy [cf. 3:23-28] goes back through the line of David, to Abraham, Adam, all the way to God! The entire Salvation History is but a preface to Jesus - the messianic promise of Is 61 is fulfilled in the inauguration of His Mission [cf. 4:17-22]. The whole story is a vibrant manifestation of His work.

3.] The Paschal Mystery is presented as a Divine Plan. Lk does, however, give special emphasis to Jesus as "prophet." The prophets who had preceded Him had been repeatedly rejected by the stiff-necked People. This is true right up through the last and greatest envoys [cf. 20:9-18]. Since humanity does reject God's word, thus Christ "must" suffer. He "has" to go on His way today and tomorrow, and the day following - the prophet should not perish away from Jerusalem [cf. 13:32,f.]. This "necessity" is stated in many different ways [cf. Lk 17:24; 18:31-34; 24:7; 26:44; cf. also Ac 17:3; 26:22, f.]. Lk deliberately moves Jesus toward His death in Jerusalem [cf. 9:51;13:33].

4.] Jesus' Mission is the climax of a long series of messengers sent by God to humanity. Like so many of those who preceded Him, Jesus, too, will suffer

rejection and death. Yet, Lk does not present Jesus merely as “one more” emissary - He is special - He is the Divine Son [cf. 20:12] - the definitive Word of God. As Prophet, Jesus completes His Mission in spite of trials and therefore initiates the promised age of salvation. The community formed in His Name is the Messianic People [cf. 22:28-30]. These are the new heirs to the promises of Israel and continue God’s work of redemption in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Salvation History framework that Lk presents permits the continuity to run from Israel through Jesus to the Church: this is Lk’s triptych. This is what Lk implies with his “beginning at Jerusalem.” [cf. Lk 24:49].

c. A Salvific Mission

1.] The core of Jesus’ message is repentance and forgiveness of sins - a message that will run through the Sermons in Ac [cf. 2:38; 3:19, 26; 8:22; 10:43; 13:38; 17:30; 20:21; 26: 18, 20]. This is the theme, too, of the *Benedictus* : you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins. [cf. 1:77]. This is how John the Baptist will be described: he went about the Jordan region, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins [cf. 3:3 and vv. 7-14].

2.] Jesus’ Mission in Lk is framed in these terms, **transformation and forgiveness**. The inaugural scene provides the lead for the whole Gospel: Jesus’ Mission is to preach the good news to the poor, liberation for the captives and oppressed, healing for the blind. And this is what Jesus actually does as His Mission begins to unfold [cf. 4:31, ff.]. The “forgiveness” aspect is a ‘release’, a freedom from bondage. Jesus does not only directly forgives sin - as the paralytic [5:20] - the sinful woman [cf. 7:47, f.] - and His own executioners [23:34] - but, He also “releases” those bound with the physical burdens of pain and illness, which the biblical mind recognized as part of the legacy of sin.

a.] The case of the woman all bent over - found only in Lk [13:10-17]- is a typical “release”. When Jesus is challenged by the synagogue ruler for curing on the Sabbath, He boldly proclaims the priority of His Mission: this daughter of Abraham should be loosed from this Satanic bond after 18 years! [cf. 13:16].

b.] This reference to “Satan” indicates another aspect of His Mission of Liberation. Jesus’ battle with evil brings Him face to face with ultimate, personified evil, Satan himself. This first encounter is in the wilderness - since the evil one cannot dominate, he leaves only **to return “at an opportune moment.”** [cf. 4:13] That “opportune” time came when Satan entered Judas Iscariot [cf. 22:23]. This awful

“test” [v. 28] led to the culmination of the Paschal Mystery - and the passion and death are brought about through the Prince of Darkness. The Christ will endure it all and thus enter into His glory.

3.] Between these two points of “inclusion”: the early temptation and the concluding culminating moments - Satan remains subtly most active. Evil is found everywhere in human life: the possessed, the sick, the blind, the lame, the oppressed. Lk notes the **transcendent dimension** to the burdens of human pain. This is the Mystery of Iniquity. Jesus’ healings and exorcisms have cosmic importance - and express the universal dimension of His Personal Mission: it is by the finger of God that He casts out demons - the Kingdom of God is indeed come upon us [cf. 11:20].

4.] **The repeated call for Conversion** is essential to Jesus’ Personal Mission. The broken are healed, but lives without purpose are led to commitment to the Kingdom of God. *Metanoia* is to characterize the community’s message [24:47] - as this was likewise the core of the Baptist’s preaching [3:3]. This is the purpose of Jesus’ Mission: He has come to call sinners to repentance [5:32]. The consoling Parables of Mercy in Lk 15 [the lost sheep, coin and son!] - all revolve around the theme of God’s infinite Mercy and the vocation to *metanoia*. [cf. 15:7, 32]. This is the Good News, the Gospel - parables being used to “defend” His Personal Mission to the outcasts [15:1-2]. Discipleship is an agreement to life-long *metanoia*. The followers of Christ need to face up to this recurring need of renunciation of every obstacle to complete commitment before accepting the call to discipleship [14:25-33].

5.] Jesus’ Personal Mission is both liberating and transforming - this is the Apostolic Mission now of the Church, one of conversion and forgiveness. The challenge of the content, the healing power of the Apostolic Missionaries in Ac is Lk’s way of showing that the Personal Mission of the Risen Christ is faithfully carried out in the community formed by him.

d. The Formation of Community:

1.] At the end of the Gospel, there is an Apostolic Assembly [24:33] - they are commissioned to continue Jesus’ Personal Mission. Its purpose is to restore Israel [1:68-79], to refashion the People of God. Pentecost climaxes in the formation of a community that prays, breaks bread together [Ac 2:43-47] keeps faithful to the Apostolic Teaching. Lk shows throughout that God’s Plan is to incorporate “all flesh” as God’s People - no blood lines are to be privileged, no geographical boundary is to hinder the development. All who fear God and act rightly are invited [Ac 10:34]. One

of Lk's central roles of the Apostolic Mission here would be the formation of the Church among diverse peoples bound together in faith, hope and love.

2.] There was indeed a struggle concerning the admission of Gentiles. Lk gives special emphasis in almost every chapter to food and Table Fellowship with outcasts.

a.] The meal is the setting for a broad acceptance of all who will be God's People. The lists of the invitees would always seem to center on the "**unwanted, unacceptable.**" Jesus dines with a tax collector - and his unwelcome friends. He merits the disapproval of the Pharisees and the Scribes [5:29-32]. The "bad tongues" consider Jesus as a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of sinners [cf. 7:34; 15:1-2]. A woman of the streets "crashes" Zacchaeus' house party [19:1-18] and attends to Jesus, causing no little scandal. Jesus' death and Resurrection continue to be marked, **framed in meals** [cf. 22:19, f.; 24:13-35, 41-43].

b.] These meals with so many outcasts are a preview of the Apostolic Mission experience of the "Church" the Jewish-Christians experience some struggles in accepting Gentiles - this battle becomes decisive for the understanding of the Apostolic Mission.

c.] The Parable of the Banquet [cf. 14:15-24] uses table-fellowship as a lesson on Salvation History. The invitees balk, and invited all kinds of lame excuses so the Divine Host opens the invitation list to the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame [cf. 14:21] - all "**personal models of the Church.**" With some space still available, the waiters go out into the high-ways and the by-ways until the hall is full [cf. v. 23] Lk [13:29] uses the **Meal Motif** in a similar way to speak the eventual inclusion as Apostolic Missionaries among the Gentiles: many will come from east and west, from north and south, all are invited to the table of the Lord.

3.] Outcasts of all times are capable of making a genuine response to the divine offer of eternal salvation - they are "invited guests" who can become "friends." This is "impartiality", the non-respecting of persons [cf. Ax 10:34].

a.] In the Gospel story this important conviction is illustrated not only by meals where the "outsiders" are often on center stage. These Gentiles often respond better than the long-time "insiders": as the Centurion [cf. Lk 7:1-10] has more faith than that found in Israel. The sinful woman "loves much", far more than the Pharisee Simon [cf. Lk 7:42-50].

b.] The towns of Tyre and Sidon are seen to be more capable of reform than Galilee [cf. Lk 19:13-15]. The Queen of the South and the people of Nineveh respond better to the wisdom of Solomon and the preaching of Jonah than “this generation” does to what is even greater than these OT heroes, as proclaimed by Jesus [cf. Lk 11:29-32]. The Samaritan leper knows how to give thanks [cf. Lk 7:11-19] and a Samaritan is a better keeper of the commandment of fraternal love, the essence of the Law [cf. Lk 19:29-37].

c.] The poor man Lazarus [cf. Lk 16:19-31] and the repentant publican [Lk 18:9-14] are heard by God - whereas the rich Israelite and the proud Pharisees are not. The offering of the Poor Widow is worth more than the weighty gifts of the rich [cf. Lk 21:1-4].

d.] By means of these many examples, the line is clear between the universal Apostolic Mission and the boundary-free Personal Mission of Jesus Christ. The right to belong to His community is not defined by one’s heritage, or status - but only by response to God’s universal invitation.

e. Faithful Witness and Perseverance:

1.] The Gospels are built on the expectation of some response. Those who encounter Jesus, hear His content, need to respond. Reactions cover the gambit from hostility to total self-giving - the Gospels focus most of their interest on the response of discipleship. The core group is to call always on the experience of Jesus Christ.

2.] This is particularly clear in Lk [cf. 24:47] - the risen Christ declares to the Apostles [cf. 24:33] that they were meant to be “witnesses of all things” [cf. Ac 1:15-26]. Other disciples, such as Barnabas and Paul, will witness to Jesus with the Apostles in their Apostolic Mission from Judea to the end of the earth. This missionary proclamation is Lk’s ideal of authentic discipleship.

3.] Genuine Discipleship has its roots in Jesus Himself - while its full consciousness is lived in the Apostolic Mission after the Ascension. One requirement is to ‘have walked with Jesus from the beginning’ [cf. Ac 1:21, f.] - from the Baptism of John to the Ascension. Only after a deep absorption of the experience of Jesus Christ would one be able to lead the Apostolic Missionaries. One of the ideal types is Mary - she is one who heard the word, and held fast to it, and brought forth fruit in patience [cf. Lk 8:15] This is Mary’s *Fiat* lived through to the end [cf. 1:26-38]. Three times Lk

praises Mary for her perseverance in her pilgrimage of faith [cf. Lk 1:45 8:19-21; 11:27-28].

4.] Genuine Discipleship flows from an attentive hearing of the Word of God and persevering in the response to it. The Missionary aura of discipleship is present in Lk's unique story of calling at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry [cf. Lk 5:1-11]. The Evangelist seems to combine the Resurrection appearance of the disciples' failed fishing efforts [cf. as Jn 21:1-14] - and the story in Mk [cf. 1:16-20]. Lk's style is to show Peter's willingness of total obedience to Jesus [cf. Lk 5:5] and this leads to an abundant catch, and to the apostolic commission to "catch human beings" [cf. 5:10].

5.] The 12 as Apostolic Missionaries begin to emerge in Lk 6:12-16 - from the general body of followers, Jesus selects 12 to be with Him. The name "12 apostles" takes on particular meaning in Lk's two books - this is that **nucleus of witnesses** who provide continuity between Jesus' Personal History and that of the early Church. In Lk 9:1-6, these 12 are sent to preach the kingdom of God and to heal - this is Jesus' precise Personal Mission. This is the Apostolic Mission that will eventually characterize Ac. The wider circle of followers is called "disciples" - from whom the 12 were selected, and the 70 who are also sent out on the Apostolic Mission, combating the power of Satan, **just as** Jesus does [cf. Lk 10:1-20]. The distinctive role of the 12 is their authoritative link with Jesus and the community.

6.] Lk strengthens this role for the 12 in his Passion narrative. They assemble with Jesus for the final Meal, the Last Supper [cf. 22: 14]. Their weakness is painfully evident in the dispute that erupts during this sacred moment: they argue among themselves 'about which of them was to be regarded as the greatest' [cf. Lk 22:24-27]. This dispute was stopped by Jesus' humble example. Despite the apostolic frailty, they will persevere with Jesus through the great test of suffering and become the leaders of God's renewed People. Into the tragedy of death, Lk presents a special reflection about the Apostles' role: the Lord tells them that they have **continued with Him in His trial**. Now He assigns them, **as** His Father had assigned Him, a kingdom, that they might eat and drink at His Kingdom, and sit on the 12 thrones judging the tribes of Israel [cf. 22:28-30]. Even Simon, so tragically failing, is noted in Mk and Mt, will ultimately persevere: Simon, the Lord states, Simon wanted to have him, that he might sift Peter like wheat. But the Lord has buoyed him up with His prayers so that his faith would not fail. Then, thus strengthened, Peter may support his brothers [cf. Lk 22:31, f.]

7.] To keep afloat his ideal of “**Perseverance**”, Lk does not emphasize as much as the other Synoptics some of the apostolic failures. There is no mention of the Apostles running away at the moment of Jesus’ arrest - there is some indication that a few were present on Calvary as Jesus was being crucified [cf. Lk 23:49:]. His acquaintances and the women were present and stood at a distance]. Lk does not omit the story of Peter’s denial, but this is healed by a face-to-face encounter between Jesus and His weak Prince of the Apostles during the trial [cf. 22:61, f.] - and this is found only in Lk.

8.] The fidelity was damaged, but not destroyed. There are three incidents that build up the coming together again of the dispersed community around the re-assembled Apostles in Jerusalem as they will be commissioned as Jesus goes back to His Father:

- the women who discover the empty tomb report back to the Apostles [cf. 24:8];
- the two disciples of Emmaus left Jerusalem discouraged, their perseverance in danger - but they encounter the Risen Jesus eucharistically and recover their courage [cf. 24:33];
- the Risen Jesus Himself, then, appears to the whole community and lays before them the Apostolic Mission that they will carry this Good news to the ends of the earth. They will be the faithful “witnesses” of all these things - not only by announcing the good news of healing, but experiencing, as He did, rejection, failure, suffering and death. Together, though, with their Risen Lord they will enter into final glory - the message of forgiveness will reach the far ends of the world.

9.] For Lk, it is vital to link the Apostolic Mission of the Church after Christ’s Resurrection to the Personal Mission that He had received from His Heavenly Father. The actual Apostolic Mission - begun with the Apostles - spreads then to deacons, elders and overseers - and other companions of the Apostles. Nonetheless, it all begins with the nuclear group, “the 12.”

f. The Power of the Holy Spirit:

1.] The final words of the Risen Jesus are these: I send the promise of My Father upon you; but, stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high! [cf. 24:49; Ac 1:4-5, 8]. Lk has the most elaborate treatment of the Holy Spirit - this expresses a number of convictions about the Christ-event and the Christian experience which flows from that. And that would include the universal Apostolic Mission of the Church. Ac shows how the power of the Holy Spirit propels the community into the Gentile world and guides its pastoral strategy.

2.] The Spirit, “another Paraclete” takes over for the visible Jesus - hence, it is not surprising that **the ‘Spirit’ appears some 42 times in Ac** - while in the **Gospel, 13 times**. Nonetheless, **all the experiences of the Apostolic Mission are rooted in the experience of the Risen Jesus**. It is the Risen Christ through Whom the Father gives the Gift of the Spirit, this fulfillment of the Promise of the Father.

3.] The Spirit is not “exhausted” in the Apostolic Mission. The storm of the Spirit accompanying the birth of Jesus, indicates the coming of the Time of Salvation, when Judaism expected an increase of the wonders of God. The great characters of the Infancy Narrative - Zechariah [1:67] - Elizabeth [v. 41] - John the Baptist [v. 15] - Simeon [2:25] - Anna, the prophetess [2:36]: all are filled with the Spirit of God and speak prophecies. Lk’s Annunciation seems to describe the gift of the Spirit in creation tones: the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you [1:35]. The explosion of the Spirit indicates the beginning of a new age, the age of Jesus the Messiah - the age of the Holy Spirit and fire [cf. 3:16]. This is matched as Pentecost in Ac 2 signals a new phase in the age of salvation with the birth of the Church.

4.] Lk shows that the Holy Spirit underlines Jesus’ entire identity - the Messiah, the Son of God. His ultimate origin is from the Spirit of God [cf. 1:35]. The descent of the Holy Spirit at the moment of Baptism is a dramatic turn of events for His Messianic designation as the “Most Beloved” [cf. 3:22]. The holy communion between the Father and the Son is celebrated by Jesus with joy in the Holy Spirit. [cf. 10:21].

5.] The power of the Holy Spirit is intimately bonded with the dynamic Personal Mission of Jesus. Lk links Jesus’ desert trial - where His Mission is put to the test - with His baptism; the phrase, ‘full of the Holy Spirit’ [cf. 4:1] bridges the intervening genealogy [3:23-38] recalls the descent of the Spirit in the Jordan [3:22]. This Holy Spirit ‘leads’ Jesus into the confrontation with the power of evil - already a preview of the struggle of Jesus with Satan in the healing ministry. It is the Power of the Spirit that accompanies Jesus to Galilee as He begins His Personal Mission [4:14].

6.] This Personal Mission orientation is noted in a central passage [4:16-30]. Jesus initiates His ministry with the citation of Is 61:1: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed Me [cf. 4:16]. This is the divine power that makes Jesus the **Prophet**, and gives force and direction to His Personal Mission of Liberation. The radiance of that Mission goes beyond the confines of Palestine and is

noted in the Nazareth incident [4:23-30]. The universal promise is fulfilled when Jesus' task is completed and the Gift of the spirit has come upon the Church.

7.] The Holy Spirit seals the kinship between **God's universal salvific will, the liberating Personal Mission of Jesus and the universal Apostolic Mission of the Church**. During the history of Israel all is potential, promise: but God would one day redeem His People and reverse the oppression suffered by the lowly [cf. the *Benedictus, Magnificat*]. During Jesus' earthly sojourn, the poor are cared for, the outcasts and rejected are brought to His table. As Jesus' work is completed, God's full embrace of humanity can now become apparent. The community formed by Jesus carries His Message of forgiveness to the end of the earth. Lk's style of narrating offers the foundation of the scope and the character of the Apostolic Mission, through the Person and the Personal Mission of Jesus Christ.

3. The Acts of the Apostles: the Church's Universal Apostolic Mission

Presentation:

[1] The Apostolic Mission is previewed in Lk 24:44-49, is already presented in the portrayal of Jesus' Personal Mission throughout the Gospel. This is now the work of the Apostles and the community in Ac. The entire composition of Ac is dominated by the Apostolic Mission. The Kingdom Mission of Jesus, climaxed in Jerusalem with His death and Resurrection, and triumphant Ascension is now to be continued through the guidance of the Risen Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit

[2] This perspective is already implicit in the Gospel- and now re-capitulated in the opening chapters of Ac. **The community assembled in Jerusalem is instructed by the Risen Lord about the "Kingdom of God" and the coming of the Spirit** [cf. Ac 1:3-5]. They are directed to remain where they are until they are empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will empower the Apostles for this Mission, stretching from Jerusalem all through Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth [cf. Ac 1:8].

[3] The Apostles docilely expect this New Dawn, and the community re-constitutes the number "12" - this puts all in readiness for the New Beginning of the Apostolic Mission [cf. Ac 1:15-26]. C. 1 of Ac confirms the final chapter of the Lk: the major concern of Lk is the universal Apostolic Mission of Salvation, announced by Simeon [cf. Lk 2:32] and John the Baptist [cf. Lk 3:6]. This was begun by Jesus' Personal Mission and now is entrusted to the Church. The apostles, under the leadership of Peter and the other Apostles, and Paul - will take this Apostolic Mission to the ends of the earth.

a. **Structure of Ac**

1.] The Apostolic Mission dominates the structuring of this reflection. The sequence is: **Jerusalem-Judea-Samaria-to the ends of the earth**. The conversion of Cornelius [cf. Ac 10] is a decisive broadening of the Mission - and there are consequences that flow from this. This is the first stage of expansion. In Ac 2-9 Lk begins to illustrate this expansion - Paul will be the “chosen instrument” [cf. Ac 9:15] who takes the message to the ends of the earth - and Peter is a principal agent in the Apostolic Mission to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria - and eventually to Rome.

2.] Peter dominates in the Jerusalem Mission:

a.] The presence of the Holy Spirit and Peter’s brilliant Pentecost sermon touch the old believers of Jerusalem - they have gathered from “every nation under heaven” [cf. Ac 2:5-11]. While the concentration is still on the “**Jew**”, Lk’s emphasis on the **Diaspora** confirms that the saving act has begun well. Peter quotes Joel, bringing god’s Spirit to “all flesh [cf. 2:7].

b.] A similar **universal dimension** is implied then in Peter’s speech at Solomon’s Portico. He reminds his listeners that they are the children of the prophets and of the Old Covenant which God bestowed on their fathers. The Lord promised Abraham that all his posterity would be blessed [cf. Ac 3:25].

c.] The healing ministry of Peter and John and the Apostles - [cf. Ac 2:43; 3:1-10; 5:12-26] - along with the wondrous growth of the Jerusalem Church [cf. Ac 2:41-47; 4:4, 32-35; 5:14; 6:7] - confirm the fulfillment of the first stage of the Lord’s promise. The community, for all practical purposes, has witnessed to the Apostolic Mission of the Risen Jesus Christ.

3.] The Death of Stephen and the persecution that follows [C 6-8] are the events that paradoxically broaden the scope, to Judea and Samaria [cf. 8:1]. The community, as Jesus, comes to life through death. This is the second stage.

a.] Those scattered into “Diaspora” went about preaching the word [cf. 8:4]. Philip evangelizes Samaria [vv. 5-8] - this move was approved by the Apostles in Jerusalem and continued on in the ministry of Peter and John [v. 25]. The Jerusalem Church remained central - even as the Apostolic Mission expands far beyond its boundaries.

b.] There are not many details of the Judean mission - but, it apparently succeeded greatly [cf. 9:31]. There is here the conversion of the Ethiopian by Philip [cf. 8:26-39]. The Mission is not yet outside of Israel - this foreigner is perhaps the first proselyte to Judaism. However, the miraculous nature of it is but a preview of the working of God's universal salvific Will.

4.] The Introduction of Paul [cf. Ac 7:58; 8:3; 9:1, ff.] opens up the third stage. He will be God's instrument moving to "the ends of the earth". He is the dominant motif of the second half of Ac. Yet, Paul's efforts need the approval of Peter and the Jerusalem Church.

a.] This is of major importance [cf. Ac 10:1-11:18]. Peter's vision at Joppa and his encounter with the devout convert, the Gentile Cornelius, lives the virtues dear to Lk: payer and thanksgiving [cf. 10:2]. With great art, this story is the micro-drama of the early Church's entire struggle with the question of the Apostolic Mission.

b.] Peter and his Church are being challenged to accept the enormous change that some of their sacred customs are to give way before the Will of God, not the respecter of persons, or of any one nation [cf. Ac 10:15, 28, 34, 47; 11:9, 17, 18]. The God Who sent Jesus chooses to give to the people of "any nation" the same gifts of the Spirit He lavished on the OT Jews.

c.] The wonderful Good News promised earlier by the Risen Jesus [cf. Lk 24:47] is now underway: then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance into life [cf. Ac 11:18].

5.] Lk does present Peter and the Jerusalem Church as being very slow in understanding the full extent of the intended Apostolic Mission, he rightly insists on Jerusalem as the "Mother" Church. The Apostolic Mission to Samaria had to be "authenticated" by the 12 [cf. Ac 8:14-17]. Thus, Paul's broader views could only flourish when the Jerusalem Church approved them. Then [Ac 11:19, f.] the word spread to Antioch by the Hellenists - Paul's Mission expands and develops [cf. Ac 13:2, f.]. The pattern of this chapter of Ac is the type for the second half of Ac: Paul preaches first to the synagogues, and only when rejected turns towards the Gentiles [cf. vv. 44-52]. Lk's insistence remains '**Jews first**' and this lies behind his writing of Ac. A corollary is then the role in the broader community of the Jewish Christian themselves. Every important increase and development of the Apostolic Mission needs to be approved by the 12, who remain the authentic link to Jesus' Personal Mission: which "began in Jerusalem."

6.] In the last half of Ac, Paul moves with **apostolic boldness to Asia, Greece, and finally to Rome**. This fulfills the Lord's promise of universal mission [cf. Ac 28:29]. Gradually the 12 fade from view, their essential task is over. The Apostolic Mission is now in the hands of a "**second generation**", Ministers of the Word [cf. Lk 1:2]: thus Paul, Barnabas and their cooperators take over, a generation with whom the author of Ac seems to be quite at home. This "**post-Apostolic**" generation has the challenge of carrying this divine message of universal salvation to the ends of the earth.

b. The Mission Message of Ac:

1.] Not only the "structure" of Ac is dominated by the Apostolic Mission, but also its "content." The major themes are already contained in Lk 24:44-49 - these run through the Gospel and Ac as well. Two of these have already been considered:

- the universal scope of the Apostolic Mission;
- its continuity of the Personal Mission of Jesus Christ.

Thus, we understand the Risen Jesus' statement that repentance and forgiveness of sins need to be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem [cf. Lk 24:47; Ac 1:8].

2.] The narrative equally confirms the Salvation History perspective already noted in the words: beginning at Jerusalem." Lk's Jesus' sojourn climaxes in Jerusalem, toward which the entire Gospel tends. This city symbolized both opposition to Him - plus, the role of the People of God in His Plan of Universal Salvation. Scripture is fulfilled in having the community endowed by the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, and having its Apostolic Mission flow out from this sacred center. The early Chapters of Ac show the Apostles and the Jerusalem Church are the constant reference point in the expansion of the Apostolic Mission - **toward Judea, Samaria and beyond**. The anchor of the Christian Apostolic Mission in Israel's sacred history is further confirmed in the experience of the early Missionaries. The Jews in Diaspora are the first to hear and accept Peter's preaching [cf. Ac 2:5-12]. The God-fearing Gentiles who come to Israel, as the Ethiopian and Cornelius, are the pioneers of the Gentile Church. Paul consistently begins in the synagogues throughout the Greco-Roman world. Only in the face of their refusal does he turn outward toward the Gentiles [cf. Ac 13:46; 26:28]. A recital of Israel's history, with special emphasis on the divine saving acts - and the People's failure to respond, forms the major part of the sermons contained in Ac [cf. 2:22-36; 3:12-26; 7:2-53; 13:16-41].

3.] This priority of Israel reflects the way history did develop in the early Apostolic Mission. This enables Lk to keep the OT bonds, and confirm the Church's work among the Gentiles. This "fulfills" all that was written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms [cf. Ac 24:44]. Jesus is the first eschatological fulfillment. With Him, are the "Last Times." His inclusive Mission, His death and ultimate victory, shaped and inspired the community's vision. The Spirit motivated work of the Church carries out the task by continuing what Christ had begun.

4.] Lk's emphasis on continuity with Israel of old does not lessen the inherent universality of the Gospel, nor take from the Gentile Apostolic Mission its supreme validity. The turn to the Gentiles followed after the rejection by Israel of old. However, the "**salvation of all flesh**" is intended by God from the outset - the Baptism of the Ethiopian, the conversion of Cornelius, the mandate of Paul to go to the Gentiles - all are clearly the result of an explicit divine initiative, regardless of the response of those first addressed. Paul's speeches [cf. Ac 14:15-17; 17:23-31] make clear that the offer of salvation to the Gentiles is not a crust from the table - but, is a vital part of God's salvific will for all peoples, already expressed by His direct creation of each person. The movement from Israel to the Gentiles is not the cause of the universal Apostolic Mission, but imply that divinely provided for moment that is clearly revealed in God Universal salvific Will.

5.] The content of Ac leaves no doubt that the community's ultimate purpose in the Apostolic Mission is eternal salvation. This is the major theme of the commission [cf. Lk 24:44-49] and the entire Gospel. Jesus' Personal Mission is shown to be the work of salvation - proclaiming and actualizing God's saving deeds and calling on people to accept the results of that transformation in their lives. This is what is intended by the "coming of the Kingdom of God". The Gospels are full of Jesus' acts of healing and exorcism, His fresh teaching and His insistent call for **conversion and repentance**.

6.] This Apostolic Mission is entrusted to the entire community, under the direction of the Apostles and their successors: 'repentance and the forgiveness of sins' should be preached in His name - all are the witnesses of these things [cf. Lk 24:47, f.].

a.] Lk presents the Apostles, Paul and the early successors to the apostles as faithfully carrying out this mandate. The risen Jesus teaches the Apostles on the meaning of the "Kingdom" [cf. Ac 1:3] - this key symbol is used to characterize the apostolic missionary preaching of Philip [cf. Ac 8:12] and Paul [cf. Ac 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31].

b.] The content of this Personal Mission of Jesus is carried through in the various aspects of the community's response. The sermons of Ac speak regularly of God's tireless goodness and the need of conversion of heart [cf. 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 13:38, f.; 16:30, f.; 20:21; 26:18-20]. The message of salvation is also proclaimed in the powerful healing ministry of the community, just as it was by Jesus' works of compassion.

c.] Thus, Lk gives full attention to the miracles performed by Peter, John, Paul and others [cf. Ac 2:43; 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 9:32-41; 14:3, 8-10; 16:16-19]. The sick, the lame, the outcasts, all receive new life, fulfilling the prophecy of Is 61 announced by Jesus in His preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth.

d.] The first miracle of Ac spells this out [cf. 3:1-16]. The healing of the lame beggar at the gate of the temple is not meant to be a glorification of the Apostles themselves but is evidence of that salvation brought through the Risen Jesus Christ and now effectively proclaimed by the Apostolic Mission of the Church: we are all His witnesses. And His name, by Faith in His name, has made the lame strong - and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of all [cf. Ac 3:15,f.]. **This Apostolic Mission of Salvation, now entrusted to the Church, is identical to the Personal Mission for which Jesus gave His life.**

7.] Closely related to the Apostolic Mission of eternal salvation is that of the need for **Community**. Lk highlights table fellowship throughout and uses the metaphor of the Banquet as his means of describing the nature of the divine work. This has a strong follow-through in Ac. The important summaries [cf. Ac 2:42-47; 32-35] illustrate the formation of community as a direct result of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, a symptom of conversion. These idealized descriptions of the Church of Jerusalem is on sharing and the absence of all need, signs of the eschatological Israel.

8.] There are other events in Ac that continue this motif:

a.] The conversion of Cornelius [cf. Ac 10-11] is one of table fellowship with a Gentile [cf. 10:9-16, 28; 11:1-18]. Peter's hesitation is directly challenged by divine revelation. Lk carefully describes the gradual awareness of Peter, and that of the rest of the Jerusalem Church, as they note that the arbitrary, temporary bound of the community is removed.

b.] It is crucial to Lk's theology that Peter's decision is ratified [cf. Ac 10:34-43], relating his fellowship with Cornelius to the ministry of Jesus who 'was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power... went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him...' [cf. 10:38].

c.] Jesus' own **boundary-breaking ministry** and His offer of forgiveness to '**everyone** who believes in Him' [cf. v. 43] are now being fulfilled in the momentous decision of the Church to accept Table Fellowship with this Gentile centurion. This "Table Fellowship" can never be distorted to mean that the state of grace is not important. The General Council of Jerusalem [Ac 15] concentrates on the matter of circumcision - but, on the broader horizon, the entire matter of association with the Gentiles is the question. this key chapter confirms the momentous step of sharing community with those considered 'outcasts' in the limited particularism of the 'Judaizers.'

9.] It is no exaggeration to maintain that the courageous **Table Fellowship** instituted by Jesus in the Gospel has as its ultimate consequences the Church's **reaching out to enfold the non-believing**, Gentile world. Not only does the **Eschatological Banquet theme** of Israel now include the 'poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame' of the city streets. The invitation has gone out to those who are distant, to the highways and the hedges of all times and ages [cf. Lk 14:15-24].

10.] Another most important element of Lk's Apostolic Mission theology is the need for the 12, for their successors, and for all to **persevere**, to be **faithful witnesses** to the Risen Jesus. This is the heart of the Community founded in His name [cf. Lk 24:44]. Following the restoration of the 12 [cf. Ac 1:15-26], and the empowerment from the Holy Spirit, it is Peter and the Jerusalem Church who become the leaders of this essential phase of the Apostolic Mission. After legitimizing this openness to the Gentiles, the Apostles' founding role appears to be completed and a "second generation" of faithful witnesses is typified by Paul, and this then dominates the concluding chapters of Ac.

11.] The Apostolic Mission statement of the Gospel had assigned to the 12 a ministry of preaching the Kingdom [cf. Lk 24:48] - but, the evangelist is able to give specific illustration of this only in the case of Peter and somewhat, regarding John.

a.] Peter plays the leadership role, delivering the inaugural address at Pentecost [cf. Ac 2:14-36] - then exercising with John the power to heal [cf. Ac 3:1-16; 5:15, f.], fearlessly taking on powerful hostility [cf. Ac 4:8-12, 19, f.; 5:29-

32]. He endured imprisonment and flogging [cf. Ac 5:17, 40,f.; 1q2:3]. All of these were trade-marks of one sent on the Apostolic Mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

b.] Equally important, **Peter** is decisive in the establishment of the community and its policies: the replacement of Judas by Matthias [cf. Ac 1:15]. Peter is the spokesperson to the crowds [cf. Ac 2:14]. He confronts the errant Ananias and Sapphira [cf. 5:1-11]. He brings the Gospel to Cornelius and persuades the Jerusalem Church to receive him [cf. 10-11]. It is Peter who leads the discussions at the Jerusalem Council [cf. Ac 15:7].

c.] The activity of the rest of the 12 is stated only in general terms [cf. Ac 2:37, 42, f.; 4:33,35;5:2, 12, 18,40; 6:2, 6; 8:1, 14; 9:27; 11:1; 14:4; 15:2, 6, 22, 23; 16:4]. These references include a whole range of activities assigned to and by Peter, including the monitoring and validation of the expanding Apostolic Mission [cf. Ac 8:14; 11:22].

d.] Paul shares then the spotlight with Peter as a Faithful Witness to the Risen Christ. He is a second-generation Apostle [cf. Ac 14:14] - not a member of the original 12, yet he commands the entire second half of the book. This is because of his unique role among the Gentiles. Paul experiences the broad challenge of the apostolic tasks and sufferings and eventually fills out the universal promise of the Apostolic mission by bringing it to Rome, for the simple Jerusalemites "the ends of the earth." In the successive ministries of Peter and Paul, the evangelist is able to sketch the entire development of the community's Apostolic Mission.

13.] In addition to these dominant, well-known individuals in the early Church, Lk's cast of characters includes other early witnesses called to continue the Apostolic Mission of the Risen Christ.

a.] The early chapters of Ac refer to John - but also to Philip and Stephen neither of whom seem to be Apostles, but their work further develops the endless horizons of the Apostolic Mission [cf. Ac 6:8; 8:5]. Associated with Paul is also Barnabas [cf. Ac 13:2] - Silas [15:22] - Judas [15:22] - John Mark [12:25], Priscilla and Aquila [18:2].

b.] These 'lesser' personalities, including both men and women, show that **the ministry of witness** is not confined to the Apostles, even though the priestly aspects of the mission are. Lk expanded Jesus' circle to include "outcasts" such as tax collectors and sinful women - very clearly, though, he also instituted the hierarchical priesthood.

c.] Likewise in Ac those poised to receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit are not only the 12 but the whole company of Jesus, including 'the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus' [cf. Ac 1:14, f.]. In the rest of his story, Lk shows that the witnessing power of the Holy Spirit energizes both men and women in the community and mobilizes them to continue in various ways the universal Apostolic Mission of salvation.

d.] Ac confirms a very simple and profound reality: that God's work of salvation, promised in the Scriptures, proclaimed by Jesus, and effected by the Spirit, is ultimately entrusted to very fallible human beings. This "witness" of the early Church is part of the early Apostolic Mission.

14.] The final element in Lk's theology of the Apostolic Mission is **the Holy Spirit**. This motif in the Gospel shows to the careful reader that not every aspect of Lk's Spirit theology is directly related to universalism. However in Ac, Lk consistently identifies **the Holy Spirit as the guiding force for the community's ever expanding Apostolic Mission**. The Spirit is presented as the Father's fulfillment of the promise and is sent by the Risen Christ as the completion of His messianic work [cf. Lk 24:49; Ac 1:4, f., 8; 2:33]. The Spirit forest the strongest links between Ac and the Gospel, between the history of Jesus and that of His community after His Ascension. The Spirit maintains the presence and directives of the Risen Christ in the Church.

15.] Two aspects of the Spirit's activity are described in Ac in some detail:

- **the impulse to universalism**; for this, Lk clearly shows that the Spirit guides the community in its awakening consciousness that it is carrying out the work of salvation from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The starting point is Pentecost [cf. Ac 2:1-4] - the Apostles and the community are lavished with the gift of the eschatological Spirit.

- **the power given to embolden the Missionary preaching**. The universal empowerment are indicated by the gift of tongues, which enables the various populations of the Diaspora to understand the message in their own language [cf. Ac 2:4-12]. Peter's speech to the crowds explains what they see and hear is the promise of the Holy Spirit given to the community by the Risen Christ.

16.] The Spirit's personal role in broadening the Apostolic Mission is then continued throughout Ac. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian is through the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 8:29, 39]. Peter's acceptance of Cornelius is confirmed by the Holy

Spirit, Who is then poured out on this Gentile and his family [cf. 10:44-48]; 11:12-18]. In the report to the Jerusalem community, Peter explains that it was the Holy Spirit Who told him to approach Cornelius, 'making no distinctions' [cf. 11:12]. The ratification of these decisions is under the impulse of the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 15:8, 28].

17.] Paul's Apostolic Mission is also guided by the Spirit. He and Barnabas are set apart for the special divine work, that continuation of the Personal Mission of Jesus Christ, the Apostolic Mission [cf. Ac 13:2, 4]. He is prevented from going to Asia so that he could make that providential move into Macedonia [cf. Ac 16:6-10]. The fateful decision to go to Jerusalem is also inspired by the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 19:21; 20:22] - a journey always full of symbolism in Lk. Paul thus duplicates the fateful decision of his Divine Master, Jesus Christ - this leads to his imprisonment and eventual death. But, providentially again, Paul appeals to Rome and is sent there to fulfill the Risen Lord's Promise [cf. Ac 19:21; 21:11]. The Holy Spirit continues the work of the Risen Lord, that Jesus win over the community. This appears most clearly whenever Lk can substitute the Spirit language for the direct words of the Risen Christ. In the account of Paul's conversion, it is the Risen Lord Himself who proclaims Paul's universal Apostolic Mission [cf. Ac 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:16-18]. The Spirit's work of continuing the Apostolic Mission to the Gentiles effects those of the "second generation" somewhat less prominent, as Barnabas [cf. Ac 11:24; 13:3, f.] - and also Apollos [cf. Ac 19:6].

18.] Lk attributes the community's apostolic courage [we "dare" to say!] in its faithful witness to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit not only expands the horizons of the early Church, but also empowers the Apostolic Missionaries with their fearless testimony even under the very real threat of imprisonment and death. This fulfills the promise of the earthly Jesus in His Mission discourse of the Gospel [cf. Lk 12:11, f.]. Peter takes on the Sanhedrin, "filled with the Spirit" [cf. Ac 4:8] - the Jerusalem community offers its bold message even under the threat of impending persecution [cf. Ac 4:31]. Stephen's prophetic speech is likewise under the impulse of the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 6:5, 10, 55]. For Lk, the Spirit that filled Jesus in His own prophetic Personal Mission of Salvation is now given to the community. Not only does this motif ensure continuity between Jesus and the Church but it states that all of history: that of Jesus Himself, and all that led up to Him, and now the life of the ecclesial community, faithfully witnessing in His Name - all is an act of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

[1] Lk-Ac show clearly that the Church's universal Apostolic Mission is the central concern. To share the message of salvation from its starting point in Israel - to its fullness among the Gentile far and wide, this is the key to all of Lk's theology. This work of salvation for the third evangelist is the final outcome of Jesus' own Personal Mission from the Father. Through rejection, His death and resurrection, He completes His work by returning to the Father in His glorious Ascension, and in His sending the Spirit from the Father. The Spirit lavished on the community will move it from within as the Interior Law to the ends of the earth. This Apostolic Mission, "anywhere in the Diocese and the world" fulfills the Scriptures.

[2] Lk almost triumphantly stated the purpose of the community's share in the Apostolic Mission. He is happy in its initial, great successes - but, does not fall into total idealization.

[a] The reluctance of the Jerusalem Church to share table fellowship with those not practicing the Jewish customs, and the gradual dawning upon Peter and the 12 about the acceptance of the Gentiles, the conversion of Saul from persecutor to Apostle - all are signs that the universal Apostolic Mission of the community was, to a degree, carried out by going against the grain of its more narrow inclinations.

[b] Lk shows the community's Apostolic Mission is truly "Costly Discipleship." The Apostolic Missionaries, especially Peter and Paul, suffer persecution, imprisonment, hardship, and rejection as they carry out their apostolic roles.

[c] These "darker" sides of the Church's Apostolic Missionary experience : the **reluctant universalism** and the **costly discipleship** - were already clear in the Personal Mission of Jesus Himself. **The Risen Jesus is the dominant paradigm for Lk's idea of the Apostolic Missionary** - followed by the stumbling Apostles themselves, **Models of the Church**. All had to press on in this Divine Apostolic Mission to the outcasts, always against the grain of established order. Jesus, too, had suffered rejection and death - as the OT Prophets and emissaries of the divine Word had before Him - in the fulfilling of His Spirit-anointed, Personal Mission from the Father. The Risen Jesus is the Source, the Goal of the Apostolic Mission.

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PART THREE

THE SACRED STIGMATA:

A. THE “PIERCED ONE” AND THE “IMMOLATED LAMB”

Introduction

The great mystery of Divine Mercy can be studied in a variety of ways. However, with the choice that Pope Pius XII made of the text from Isaiah [cf. 12:3 - water will be drawn joyfully from the fonts of salvation], the main symbol traced here has been “water.”

It is the NT writings attributed to St. John that the theme of water seems to reach its highest level. So, it is to these writings that offer the deepest reflection for the theme.

St. John speaks of Jesus as “the Pierced One” [cf. Jn 19:38; Rv 1:7], from Whose side the streams of salvation flow. First, it will be necessary to trace the source of this figure.

I.] OT Background

1. Texts of →Zechariah: the writings of this Prophet are generally divided into two parts:

- First [Zc 9:1-8:23];
- Second [9:1-14:21]

Presentation

[1.] It is to this Second Part that our interest is drawn because of a very special series of texts in the last three chapters. He offers four images:

[a.] Zechariah speaks of a spirit of kindness and prayer being poured out over the House of David. The Israelites will come to look on “the Pierced One” - there will be mourning like that of Hadad Rimnon in the plains of Megiddo [cf. Zc 12:10, ff.].

[b.] Then, a few verses down, the author speaks of a mysterious eschatological fountain that will be opened for Judah, one for sin and impurity [cf. Zc 12:3].

[c.] The prophecy continues still a few verses further on, asking about the source of the wounds on the body of the Prophet [cf. Zc 13:6].

[d.] Immediately following is a messianic passage, in which it is said that the Lord is going to strike the Shepherd and the Sheep will be scattered [cf. Zc 13:7].

[2.] These texts are applied by the Synoptics and most especially by Jn as being fulfilled in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

a. **“The Pierced One” [Zc 12:10,ff.]**: this is the first application. The mention of the Plains of Megiddo would make one think perhaps of King Josiah who died there: he had gone into battle with the Egyptians there, and in the very first encounter was killed by Neco, the Egyptian Pharaoh [cf. 2 K 23:28,- 30] in the year 609.

1.] The II Ch [35:19-27] adds some particulars: the Egyptian Pharaoh really did not want to fight the remaining Judahites. And the Chronicler tells us that God spoke to Josiah through the mouth of Neco. But, Josiah was determined to engage in battle, and the Egyptian bowmen fired on him, and badly wounded him. He asked to be taken off the field of battle, and was brought back to Jerusalem, where he died.

2.] All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him, and the Chronicler adds that Jeremiah composed a Lament for King Josiah [perhaps Jr 22:10, 15, 18; Lm 2:1-3; Zc 12:11-14], which, it was claimed, was still recited today, as they mourned this King.

3.] The II K [cc. 22-23:30] and II Ch [cc. 34:1-15:26] give relatively good “coverage” to the King who died in the Plains of “Megiddo.”

a.] King Josiah was engaged in a renewal of the land and its People. There was discovered during this in the Temple he was renovating an unusual document. It was eventually identified simply as ***The Book of the Torah***, which many scholars today believe was the legislative portion of the Book of Deuteronomy.

b.] When Josiah had verified that this indeed was most likely the “D” Document, perhaps brought south with the fall of the Northern Kingdom defeated by Assyria in 722, a century earlier. The King would use this book as the basis of his planned “Covenant Renewal.”

c.] The Ritual celebrating this Renewal was observed with the utmost vigor and splendor, surpassing that of King Hezekiah, a century before. King Josiah used the Deuteronomic document as the basis of his reform.

d.] With this action, Josiah clearly broke with Assyria. The King ordered the restoration of the Passover to be re-instituted - as this had been neglected for a long time ¹⁴.

e.] Many think of King Josiah as the last outstanding monarch in the south. He began the religious reform as a very young man, perhaps only 18 years of age. with the extraordinary festival of Covenant Renewal that he ordered [cf. 2 K 23:22], a true “Memorial” was celebrated: it was a leap backward, in that it was carried out in total accord with the Book of the Torah, which had been found in the Temple. It was also a celebration of hope: at the time, there were political forebodings that gave the King and the People of Judah a substantial reason to fear.

f.] Egypt to the south decided to join forces with Assyria to the north, in order to confront and hopefully defeat what was considered “the common enemy”, Mesopotamia. King Josiah reasoned that he could interrupt this alliance, and try his chances with the Mesopotamians. Nonetheless, Josiah lost the fight - and his life.

g.] “Mesopotamia” is the land between two rivers: the Tigris and the Euphrates. The northern part of the region was Assyria, and the lower part was the Babylonian Empire, which emerged from all this. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians, subjugated the remaining tribes of Israel, and sent them off into captivity ¹⁵. They would eventually be defeated by Cyrus, the Persian Leader - the theme of the first half of li-Is - he will be honored by Israel with the title, “the servant of God.”

¹⁴cf. Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the OT*. 3rd edition, Englewood Cliffs. NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1975, pp. 348-352, passim.

¹⁵cf. Joan Comay, *The Hebrew Kings*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1977, pp. 133-137, passim.

There is the possibility that Josiah's action was not totally in vain. It may be that he had been able to delay the superior forces of Neco long enough for the Babylonians, into whose hands now Mesopotamia had fallen, to conquer the Egyptian army in an overwhelming manner ¹⁶.

The news from the plains of Megiddo must have been a shock to the faithful Deuteronomists. In their view, to be "faithful to God" meant always prosperity - and Josiah really was this, but died anyway and was defeated. The battle of Megiddo for the simple believers of the year 609 before the coming of Christ was indeed a kind of spiritual "Armageddon", a cataclysmic battle meaning the end of the world they knew and wanted. It was just a matter of time now, when all seemed over: the Northern Kingdoms were already gone, and the death of King Josiah meant the end of "Israel" as a People. Indeed, Josiah could really have been the historical background to the mysterious figure, "the Pierced One" of Zechariah. The Book of Sirach eulogizes him as something like "blended incense; sweet as honey, music at a festival. He tried to covert people, and had set his heart on the Lord [cf. Si 49:1-4]. The Deuteronomic definition of vocation is the action by which the "Lord sets His heart and chooses" one [cf. Dt 7:7]. King Josiah had responded in kind.

The third image [the second one is **the purifying stream** which will be considered below] is that of **the wounded Prophet**, followed by the separate [the fourth] oracle of the **Shepherd who has been struck** [cf. Zc 13:7]. This verse is mentioned in the Synoptics, on Jesus' lips on the way from the Cenacle Room of the Last Supper, as He and the disciples made their way to the Mount of Olives [cf. Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27] - and a part of the verse is found in Jn [cf. 16:32].

b. The Shepherd Who is "struck by God" [cf. Zc 13:7]: The rather unusual expression "struck by Yahweh" [cf. Zc 13:7], is most reminiscent of the Suffering Servant, who, too, was "struck by God and brought low" [cf. Is 53:4]. The "Pierced One" might also very well have been the personified Immolated Lamb, developed in the Book of the Apocalypse, as:

- 1.] - the Lamb as the **Paschal** Lamb [Exodus];
- 2.] - the Lamb as **Servant** [Isaiah];
- 3.] - the Lamb as [Soteriological] **Shepherd** [Ezechiel] ¹⁷.

¹⁶cf. Jhn Bright, *A History of Israel*. A Revised Edition. London: SCM Press Ltd., 2nd Impression 1974, pp. 315-324.

¹⁷cf. J. Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Aocalypse*. Paris: Descelee 1965, pp. 17-34.

1.] The Lamb as Paschal Holocaust [Exodus]

Just as the Servant [cf. Is 53:10], the Lamb is the **asham**, the holocaust oblation of Atonement. The unknown Prophet of the Apocalypse associates the Immolated Lamb with the ancient sacrifice of the Pasch. The Book of Exodus contains some of the earliest prescriptions for the Ritual of the Pasch [cf. Ex 12].

The Lamb is regularly personified as “Servant” [cf. Is 53:7], and hence is an early figure of Jesus Christ. The Lamb of the Apocalypse is remembered particularly as Victim, a “sacrificial” Lamb.

a.] Redemption: in the Exodus story, it is the Blood of the Lamb that serves as the means of Israel’s redemption. The blood was to be sprayed by means of the hyssop onto the door posts [cf. Ex 12:13, 22, ff.]. This is ideally represented in the Apocalypse, as the Immolated Lamb is worthy to open the seals of the mysterious scroll, because His blood purchased human beings for God [cf. Rv 5:9]. This Blood of the Lamb of God [cf. Rv 5:9; 7:14] has also removed sin [cf. Rv 1:5]. The fullest meaning of the Immolated Lamb [cf. Rv 5:9, 12; 13:8] is that it is “sacrificial.”

The blood of the Lamb, as the principle of life, had expiatory value. These ancient rituals, though, had also an eschatological value - looking ahead to the end times, when all would come to celebrate the final Pasch and Festival of Tabernacles: all would indeed be the People of God.

c.] Covenant: there are several indications in the Apocalypse that the Immolated Lamb was the sacrifice of initiating the New Covenant. “Covenant” is always meant to be **a relationship of life**. Along with being offered as holocaust, and offering expiation, the Blood of the Lamb likewise establishes the New Life of the Covenant.

[1] There are evident similarities between the ritual of aspersion with the blood of the sacrificial victim, and the drawing up of the Covenant of Sinai [cf. Ex 24:8], and what is being described in the Apocalypse. Moses, for example, asked the people to prepare for these days, to wash their garments [cf. Ex 19:14]. And the people who have been through the “ordeal” are those who have washed their robes clean again in the blood of the Lamb [cf. Rv 7:14].

[2] Jn’s truly “Paschal Gospel” is noted in many ways: Jesus dies at the very moment that the Lambs are being sacrificed in the Temple [cf. Jn 18:28; 19:14, 31]. Furthermore the “compassionate” breaking of the legs of those

crucified, with Jesus was not carried out. And Jn reminds his faithful that this goes all the way back to an old injunction regarding the Paschal Lamb [cf. Jn 19:36 +; ex 12:46].

[3] The Blood of the Covenant is the element establishing **New Life**. Once the People had accepted the reading of the Book of the Covenant, Moses sprinkled them with the blood in the basin. Some had already been sprinkled on the representatives of Yahweh [the altar] and Israel, thus indicating a Covenant of Life between Yahweh and His People.

[4] The Apocalypse sees the eschatological events as a grandiose celebration of the Pasch, and also of the Festival of Tabernacles.

[5] Il-Is's idea of the People of God never needing to look for water again is part of the symbolism of the Lord's Mercy in the OT. Il-Is stated that "He Who pities them" [a kind of descriptive definition of God - cf. Is 49:10] will lead them and guide them as a Good Shepherd, even at the cost of His own life, to the streams of fresh water. The Apocalypse unites a number of OT passages when the Seer announces: God's People will never hunger or thirst again, nor will they be plagued by scorching wind. The Immolated Lamb, now the Good Shepherd, will lead them to the sources of "living water". [cf. Rv 7:16, ff.]

[6] The Lord presents Himself also as the Comforter of Israel: He personally will wipe away the tears from their eyes [cf. Rv 7:16]. This is so reminiscent of an old prophecy found early in Isaiah, but perhaps pertaining to the times of captivity [cf. Is 25]. As in the Good Shepherd [cf. Ps 23], the Lord will serve also as Host. He will prepare a fine banquet for His People - there will be no more sadness, no more separation, no more death: the world of the past is gone [cf. Rv 21:1-4]. Here, the imagery is the spouse descending down out of heaven.

[7] The miracle of the fresh water in the midst of the desert will be repeated, but in a way that has surpassed the best imaginings of even the skilled Prophets.

[8] On Sinai, the Israelites were declared to be a priestly, royal people [cf. Ex 19:6]. The Apocalypse will apply these words of the Covenant ceremonial also to the New People of God. All those who have indeed washed their conduct in the Blood of the Lamb became a Kingdom of Priests [cf. Rv 1:5; 5:10] - and it may be that this passage came to the author of the Apocalypse from Il-Is [56-66], promising that the New People of God will be named priests, servants and ministers of God [cf. Is 61:6].

[9] Isaiah has bought the “royal priesthood” of the People of God as the effect of the coming Messiah. The Apocalypse has seemed to re-read the stories of exodus through the eyes of Isaiah. It is in the Lamb as Servant that the Apocalypse will see Him as the Shepherd Who is “struck” by God, offers His life in Atonement.

2.] The Lamb as Servant [Is 53]

a.] This theme is found in the 4th Cantic of the mysterious Suffering Servant - Who offers His life in “atonement”, as a priestly personality; He serves as the new leader of God’s People, as the New King - and surely He is a Prophet, thus fulfilling the three specially chose **offices of mediation** of ancient Israel, which failed the People of God.

b.] Very much like another Prophet, Jeremiah [cf. 11:19], the Servant is led to the slaughter house much like a Lamb. These Servant Canticles changed the traditional concept of “Messiah”. He would not come in power, but rather as One who does not cry out, does not crush the wavering reed, nor snuff out the flickering flame. Rather than a bold prophet, the “Servant” is endowed with the traits of the Wisdom Teacher.

c.] The Apocalypse, therefore, seems to offer an image of Jesus Christ based on a re-reading of the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezechiel. There is great emphasis in this re-reading of the Fourth Cantic of the Suffering Servant, Is 53.

d.] There is sufficient evidence that the early Church made abundant use of the Servant imagery [cf. Ac 4:27, 30; Ph 2:5-11]. The early theology also made abundant use of the Servant theme.

e.] Among the Servant prophecies, it seems that this particular verse, comparing the Servant to a Lamb [cf. Is 53:7], drew more than its expected share of attention in the NT.

[1] Philip was meditating on this verse when the Ethiopian servant of Queen Candace approached him [cf. Ac 8:32, ff.].

[2] In the doctrinal catechesis presented in Peter's letters [cf. 1 P 1:19], the mystery of Redemption is presented under the imagery of the sacrifice of the "pure and immaculate Lamb."

[3] The Apocalypse gives its share of emphasis to the Immolated Lamb [cf. Rv 5:6; 13:18]: this is further evidence of the early edification received in the thought of Jesus coming as the Immolated Lamb.

f.] A basic hope presented by the Apocalypse is the fact that there will indeed be an "ordeal" for those who really choose to follow the Immolated Lamb. But, that immolation will end in victory - sacrifice will mean life [eternal glory] - death will be transformed by the Lamb into eternal life. Death is exalted, transfigured - new life has come; final victory has been achieved by the Immolated Lamb, Who sacrificed Himself as the Father's Servant.

g.] This transformation has begun: the Lamb has become the Shepherd, leading God's People through the valley of darkness, toward the waters of repose, where the eternal table has been prepared [cf. Ps 23].

3.] The Lamb as Shepherd [Ezechiel]

a.] The Apocalypse presents a Lamb with royal power. the animal acts very much unlike a Lamb, by getting angry [cf. Rv 6:16, f.]. However, He does wage a terrible combat, eventually wins [cf. Rv 17:14]. He is the Good Shepherd and Guide [cf. Rv 7:17].

b.] The many attributes of the Lamb-Shepherd make most sense when read in connection with the above. While the image is indeed the Lamb, the personality in mind is the Servant.

c.] There is also similarity in his imagery with the Prophet Ezechiel. He had spoken of a Good Shepherd [cf. Ezk 34], and that the Lord Himself would find good shepherds for His flock. e speaks of a Shepherd of the line of David - which, with the end of Judah, seems to have been terminated. This Davidic Good Shepherd will be in charge of the flock: he will pasture them, and the flock will know a **Covenant of Peace** [cf. Ezk 34: 23, ff.]. Ezechiel looked forward to one fold and one Davidic Shepherd [cf. Ezk 37: 24, ff.].

d.] Thus, in the Lamb of the Apocalypse, Isaiah and Ezechiel, along with the figures from the Exodus Pasch, have brought together an

extraordinary synthesis. the Apocalypse presented a Lamb, at the Throne, Who will be the Shepherd. He will lead the thirsty flock to the streams of living water - and God Himself will dry their tears [cf. Rv 7:17]. The promise that comes again is that they will never hunger or thirst again. the Lamb in this instance takes the place of God Himself - as He functions in the Apocalypse, the way Yahweh is presented by Il-Is.

e.] The People of God almost naturally were looked upon as the “flock” of Yahweh. The image of the Good Shepherd in ancient Israel did have implicit within it, a sense of the royalty. In the OT, there was something of a tendency to reserve this imagery to God Himself. The Apocalypse speaks specifically of the Shepherd on a few instances [cf. Rv 7:17; 14:4] - but, the Shepherd’s staff, or scepter, is mentioned often [cf. Rv 2:27; 12:5; 19:15].

f.] A very special Lamb will lead the People of God to the streams of fresh water: He is the Paschal Oblation, the Suffering Servant, the Holocaust offered in Atonement - and He is at the same time, the Good Shepherd, Who gives up His life for His flock.

c. **The Eschatological Stream:** this was predicted by Ezechiel - it is a further image within these few verses. A fountain will be opened and this will be for sin and impurity [cf. Zc 13:1]. This mysterious eschatological fountain does not seem to have had any connection in the original writing of these oracles. Nonetheless, In Jn’s writing, the symbolism of Ac all comes together to provide an extraordinary insight into the Mercy of God. To present this, there will first be a few reflections on OT Thirst.

2. **A Rapid Survey of Texts Concerning Thirst:** The Oracle of Isaiah has sounded down through the centuries: He is the God of our salvation, the Strength, our New Song. And fresh water will be drawn joyfully from the sources of redemption [cf. Is 12:3]. The literature of ancient Israel is replete with the theme of thirst:

a. **In the Pentateuch:** the theme of thirst is intimately connected with the desert sojourn. The great “wonder of water” is noted a number of times.

1.] The Israelites were complaining about their “freedom” in the desert, and were sorely tempted to return to the “flesh-pots” of slavery. In their torment of thirst, they complained against Moses [cf. ex 17: 1, ff.].

2.] This pattern seems to repeat itself in the desert sojourn, as will be noted below. In the harsh experience of the desert, “there was no water for the

community". In such sharp contrast to the Garden of Eden, the desert was a place of no figs, vines, pomegranates - not even water to drink! [cf. Nb 20: 2, ff.].

3.] The Deuteronomist saw the lack of water as the result of Israel's failure to serve the Lord God. In response to this, the People that God meant for Himself will have to experience hunger and thirst [cf. Dt 28:48], such basic human sufferings.

b. In the "Former Prophets" [Historical Books]: there is the unusual story of David risking the lives of his stalwarts, in asking them to go behind the enemy lines to get him a drink of water. In a ceremonial gesture, David then pours the water away - not being able to drink water for which men have risked their lives to obtain. [cf. 2 S 23:13, ff.].

c. In the "Later Prophets": thirst is so often associated as a clear indication of the great need the Israelites have for God. The presence of water was always an indication of divine blessings; while its absence often was seen as a punishment.

1.[There is a prophecy early in Isaiah predicting the exile, which will be imposed for "want of perception". The high and the mighty, as well as the lowly, will experience hunger and thirst [cf. Is 5:13]. Streams of water in dry places is the image used to describe leadership according to the **Torah** - they are like the shade of a great rock in thirsty ground [cf. Is 32:1, ff.]. The Prophet also mentions the mirage of a thirsty person, who dreams he has come to fresh water - but, he awakes, with his throat still parched [cf. Is 29:8]. Isaiah also offers a vision of the Messianic times: the blind, deaf, the lame, and dumb, will all be healed - and there will be streams in the desert, lakes in the wilderness, out of dusty soil will spring a fountain [cf. Is 35:6].

2.] It is more in Deutero-Isaiah that this imagery of water is the more developed. In this Book of Consolation, II-Is repeatedly offers the promise that the thirsty will have plenty of water, and across the desert there will be an "arbor-way". The Messianic times will be characterized by the water in the wilderness. The People chosen by the Lord will drink abundantly from the streams, and in response will sing the praises of the Lord [cf. Is 43:20]. The association with the streams of fresh water and the Spirit is also made by II-Is. The Spirit and God's blessings will pour out like streams of water on the dry ground [cf. Is 44:3].

It seems that this Prophet of Consolation has recognized the two wonders of Exodus repeating perhaps the two stories of the original Creation: the dividing of the

waters, and the obtaining of abundant streams of fresh water from underneath the desert floor by tapping the stone. The promise was fulfilled that God's people would not go thirsty, for the Lord split the rock and gave his Chosen People a drink [cf. is 48:21]. The Messianic Servant will spring up like a sapling planted in arid ground, but nurtured with hidden springs [cf. is 53:2]. And the Book of Consolation comes to a close with the exultant invitation: come to the water, anyone who is thirsty! [cf. Is 55:1].

3.] Jeremiah: identified the Lord Himself with the "Fountain of Living Water." The Israelites rejected this refreshing Source, and built for themselves cisterns that could not contain any water. The Prophet was bemoaning the many pacts that they had made with earthly rulers, and expressing his sorrow for the fact that his People had not returned to the Lord. He deeply regrets that Israel has rejected the Fountain of Living Water [cf. Jr 2:6, 13,18; 127:13].

4.] Ezekiel: saw what was coming, as did Jr: early in his prophecy, he compares Israel to the Vine. The Lord had originally planted it next to the streams of living water - and the branches of the vines turned into scepters. But, in the Exile, the vine will be back out in the desert, the waterless country of drought - and it will produce no more kings [cf. Ezk 19:10, ff.].

Ezk lays the blame for the failure in a particular way on the kings and their poor leadership. These kings trampled and muddled the waters the flock was meant to drink - in the promise for the new times, the Lord will send the seasonal rains, and enrich the soil and the earth [cf. Ezk 34: 18, f., 26]. The coming of the New Covenant will be noted when clean, fresh water will be poured over Israel, and the People will be cleansed. The Garden of Eden will return [cf. Ezk 36: 24, ff., 34], f.]. In this New Eden, there will be a harvest every month because of the wondrous river that will be flowing from the sanctuary - even the leaves of the trees will be medicinal [cf. Ezk 47: 1, ff.].

5.] The Prophet, Hoseah in describing punishment, sees Israel dying of thirst [cf. Ho 2:3, ff.]. The certainty of the Lord's coming is compared to the new dawn, the return of light: these are always certain and predictable. However, the precise timing of the spring rains watering the earth cannot be predicted with such precision - but they will come, and so will the Lord [cf. Ho 14:5, ff.].

6.] Joel's vision of the new times will be wine and milk flowing the mountains and the hills. The dried up river beds will be filled anew with fresh water, and a fountain will spring out from the Lord's own house [cf. Jl 4:18].

7.] Amos: in the context of the Exile, the prophet's message was not unlike that of the Deuteronomist: the Lord ;permitted the desert experience to work a conversion, to test hearts. Amos presents the Lord's complaint that even when He kept back the rains, and Israel's thirst went unquenched, still they did not come back to the Lord [cf. Am 4:7, ff.]. This same prophet also predicted a terrible famine, and a drought - not of water, but of hearing God's word. The Israelites will fail to find it, and delicate girls, as well as youthful swain - all will faint from thirst [cf. Am 8: 11, ff.].

8.] Particularly in Deutero-Zechariah is the image of water brought to the fore: the Prophet directed Israel to offer prayer for the seasonal rains, as these produce grain and grass, bread for humanity and grazing grounds for the herds [cf. Zc 10: 1, ff.]. The final Festival of Tabernacles will see no more cold nor frost. Even in the dark night, there will be an abundance of light, with the renewal of the splendors of creation. There will be an abundance of streams of water, in all the seasons of the year [cf. Zc 14:6, ff.].

d. As would be expected, the Psalms make abundant use of water as a symbol for a variety of responses to God:

1.] Ps 22: in the Canticle of Hope of the Poor Man, the Psalmist compares his plight with that of water draining away. The description is almost that either of terrible fear, or of a fever: his palate is dry as dust, and his tongue is stuck to the roof of his mouth [cf. Ps 22:14; cf. also Ps 32: 3, ff.].

Other psalmists saw the abundance of water as an expression of God's power in Providence. The Lord's visitation of the earth provided it with abundant water. The showers were controlled, and the image given is one of bucolic paradise. The valleys are resplendent in their garment of grain, and Israel responds with shouts of joy [cf. Ps 65:9, ff.]. In a magnificent "Creation Canticle", the Psalmist praises the Lord for sending the streams of water into the ravines, affording abundant sources even for the wild animals to have their drink [cf. Ps 104: 10, ff.].

2.] Ps 42 The Lament of an exiled Levite: this well-known comparison of the doe seeking the running streams offers a most apt imagery for one seeking the splendors of the ancient Temple ceremonial. This Psalm opens what experts see as the Second Book of Psalms, which ends with Ps 83. It is the cry of an exile in a hostile area. The "homesickness", or nostalgia for the "good old days" cuts

him profoundly. This profound yearning for God is almost mystical in its depth and beauty.

The image of an exhausted, thirsty [perhaps wounded, or chased] doe has been the object of the reflection of mystics and poets through the centuries. The delicate doe “pants” for the fresh, leaping streams that will restore her. One can readily imagine the delicate animal frightened and worn out by the chase, perhaps by coupling the imagery of Ps 22, where the Psalmist feels surrounded by a pack of wild dogs, and his mouth is so dry! [cf. Ps 22] ¹⁸.

3.[Ps 63: The Thirst for God: this Psalm speaks of one comparing his yearning for God like the dry desert absorbing the water. It is a poem that seems closely associated with the two preceding Psalms. “The Prayer of One in Exile” [Ps 61] and “The Canticle of Hope in God Alone” [Is 62]. Again, this psalmist expresses a kind of mystical need for God, best described in his view as parched, weary and waterless land. This is a profession of unusual faith - all that is less important has been put aside: there remains only a single good: God Himself!

There is in each person a natural quest for the Absolute, for happiness, in both truth and goodness. The unknown author of this Canticle describes his basic yearning as one of the “Poor Whom Yahweh loves”. There is almost a nuptial intimacy noted [cf. v. 2], as the soul “clinging” to the Lord. The NT will develop this in Paul’s words: to be joined to the Lord is to be one spirit with Him [cf. 1 Co 6:17] ¹⁹.

4.] Ps 146: “Th Humble Supplication of One Persecuted”: this poet uses the same symbolism. The poet stretches out his hands like thirsty ground. The Psalmist looks back over the years through the sacred memories of Israel’s history: he recalls the days of once upon a time. He meditates, ponders on the wonders of God. Implicit in his prayer is that the Lord ‘perfect’ what has been begun [cf. Ph 1:6]. He asks for help to sustain present grief ²⁰.

§§§

Summary

So, along with the dividing line of the Red Sea - which would correspond to the Genesis 1 story and “the waters of chaos” threatening God’s People - the Word and

¹⁸cf. Louis Jaquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l’homme. Etude textuelle et litteraire et doctrinale*. Belgique: Ducuolot 1979, Vol. 2 pp. 3-21, passim.

¹⁹cf. L. Jacquet, *ib.*, pp. 288-301.

²⁰ cf. *ib.*, Vol. 3, pp. 663-673.

the Spirit of God separated the waters so that the world could be. Exodus, offers a new rendition of the Genesis 2 story as well, the making of the water appear from underneath the desert floor.

In the Encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, Pope Pius XII makes this comment: "...For those who were listening to Jesus speaking [in Jn 7], it certainly was not difficult to relate these words by which He promised the fountain of 'living water' destined to spring from His own side, to the words of sacred prophecy of Isaiah, Ezechiel and Zechariah, foretelling the Messianic Kingdom - and likewise, the symbolic rock from which, when struck by Moses, water flowed flowed forth in a miraculous manner [cf. Is 12:3; Ezk 47:1-12; Zc 13:1; Ex 17:1-7; Nb 20:7-13; 1 Co 10:4; Rv 7:17; 22:1].

e. **History:** due to the absence of water, there develops in the Books of Exodus and Numbers, what modern exegetes have referred to as a "Complaining Pattern", which might have served also liturgical purposes. Three incidents come to mind:

- 1.] **Marah** [cf. Ex 15:22-26]: a "pattern" unfolds:
 - the occasion of the people's murmuring was because they were not able to drink the waters of Marah, because they were bitter [cf. v. 23];
 - Moses is contested: and appeals to God;
 - the Lord intervenes through Moses; mediation - he places the wood in the waters, and they become sweet.

This drama almost naturally lends itself to a liturgical reading. It would strike the Israelites listening 'this day', and they would be asked to look into their own judgments. In the Deuteronomist tradition, this was looked upon as one of those times when the Israelites failed to trust in God.

2.] **Rephidim**: [cf. Ex 17:17]. It does not seem that this is terribly far from Sinai. The Hebrew word for controversy, *rib*, is found in the middle of the word **Meriba**. Some wonder that perhaps in the distant past, "Massah and Meribah" were localities where juridical decisions were made - but, they have come down in sacred history as the place where Israel 'complained' against God ²¹.

a.] These ancient stories do offer a kind of "pattern":

²¹cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus - OT Library*. London: SCM Press, 3rd Impression 1979, pp. 305-309.

- the occasion of the complaint: there was no water near their encampment at Rephidim;
- the crowd takes up the complaint with Moses - who in turn complains, and asks why they find fault with him. In their response, the crowd shows that it has lost a bit of faith that it had in the exultant 'victory' of its first departure from the 'house of slavery.' The Israelites once more believe that they will perish in the desert.
- Moses goes to God, with more urgency this time: he prays that it but a short while, they will most likely stone him!
- the Lord then intervenes, directing Moses to strike the rock, with the same staff that divided the sea.

b.] This is still a further miracle over the waters. There is an increase of intensity in this second "complaining" story. There is a much more intense litigation brought against God -and the response to the complaining is still another miracle.

3.] **Kadesh** [cf. Nb 20:1-13]: some interpret these merely as separate incidents during the long sojourn in the desert. A deeper lesson, though, is the fact that from these diverse happenings, Israel - and the worshippers of every generation who heard these stores read to them - would be reminded of the sacred wonders of their past. The Lord indeed was a kind of "Rock" following Israel across the wasteland [cf. 1 Co 10:4]. The real teaching here is that God will not abandon His People who turn to Him in their need.

a.] The episode at Kadesh begins with an incident that spreads already a pall of gloom over what is about to happen. The text reads tersely: it was there that Miriam died [cf. v. 1]. Then begins the "Complaint Pattern":

- the occasion, again, is the fact that there was no water for the 'community', or the 'assembly'. These are almost 'priestly', liturgical expressions;
- Moses is subjected to a real vitriolic attack: we would have been better off had we died! Why did **YOU** bring us out here to this wilderness, a whole 'assembly'? There follows a rather traditional description of the desert, in stark contrast with the Garden of Eden which once was "home": there are no figs, no pomegranates- not even any water to drink.
- not unlike the action of the High Priest, Moses leaves the main body of the 'assembly' and **prays face down, in his role of mediation**.
- and once more, the Lord intervenes. Moses has been directed 'to take up the branch.' This circumstance would make one wonder if this would have later in Israel's history been a reading for the Feast of Tabernacles. The People in the temporary

'huts' would have been forcefully reminded of their ancestors' situation, long ago in the desert.

- then, the waters sprang forth from the rock.

b.] Both Moses and Aaron are condemned here by the sacred author - perhaps for joining in on the complaining. On a deeper level, Moses enters into profound solidarity with his People, being condemned with them. In fact, like One later whom Moses represents, He, too, would die outside the sacred precincts. This perfect identification of the High Priest with his People is found in the Servant Theme, especially in Is 53, and then in Jesus Christ ²².

4.] This thrice - repeated episode of complaining due to the lack of water brings out a profoundly religious fact: God's People indeed did suffer great discomfort and opposition in the harsh desert journey. The many trials, though, led to truly heated accusations against Moses, and against God. By the same token, the "Complaining Pattern" shows repeatedly the infinite Mercy of God ²³.

a.] The rock in the wilderness would remain through the generations as the "witness" of the providential intervention on the part of God in behalf of His People. The rock in the desert also would remind Israel for generations that they could count on the Lord to assist them and to guide them ²⁴

b.] This journey of the People of God across the desert will be looked at differently according to the traditions: there is one tradition that saw the Exodus generation as disobedient, and hence, punished [cf. Ps 95]. The "major" view, though, seems to have been that of the prophets - and also of the Book of Numbers. This was the time of the "engagement" of the Lord to his People. Deuteronomy saw the desert as punishment, as a time of trial, inspired, of course, by a Father's love. Numbers, though, saw it as a prophetic imagery of an ideal time in which God's People was called to make a choice. The desert was meant to be a time of conversion for all those preset in the community', or 'assembly.' The Book of Numbers is also the record of incessant unhappiness of God's People with Him. The present suffering [cf. Nb 11:6; 20:2; 21:5, f., 23, 33] is always a choice to make choices. Undergoing the

²²cf. R. Michaud, *Moïse - histoire et théologie*. Paris: du Cerf, Lire la Bible/49. 1979, pp. 133-147, passim.

²³ cf. B. S. Childs, *ib.*, pp. 254-264.

²⁴cf. F. Michaeli, *Le livre de l'Exode - II, Commentaire de l'AT*. Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé' 1974, pp. 148-152, passim.

ordeal, strengthened by the water that was provided, along with the divine promises, Israel is assured of entering the Promised Land ²⁵.

c.] The water from the rock remains as one of the great wonders of ancient times, and was remembered through the succeeding generations in Israel's Songs of Praise [cf. Dt 8:15; Ne 9:15; Ps 78:15-20; 105:41; 114:8; Sgs 11:4; Is 48:21].

Summary

What has been seen thus far now finds its way into John's writings, where these symbols are fulfilled in a manner beyond the wildest dreams of the early prophets:

- the two creation stories: that of seven days, the Lord dominating the unruly abyss - and that of calling the absent waters up from underneath the earth's floor;
- these "wonders of God" repeated in some way in Exodus: the dividing of the Sea of Reeds - and the calling up of the water from the stone in the desert.

These stories are then re-worked in some way, particularly by Isaiah and Ezechiel - and then Zechariah makes his contribution:

- the Pierced One;
- the Eschatological Fountain;
- the "Soteriological" Good Shepherd, Whose life is a holocaust for God's People.

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²⁵cf. J. deVaulx, *Les Nombres. Sources Bibliques*. Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 219-227; cf. + C. M. Martini, SJ, *Vita di Mose': Vita di Gesu' - Esistenza pasquale*. Rome 1979, pp.135-158.

II.] THE JOHANNINE CONNECTION

Presentation:

[1] This may best be noted by tracing the various miracles, or discourses, concerning “water” as found in the writings attributed to John. the following episodes come to mind:

- I} | - Cana [Jn 2]
- | - the Woman of Samaria [Jn 4]
- | - the Discourse on the Bread of Life [Jn 6]
- | - the Discourse for Tabernacles [Jn 7]

- II} | - the Pierced Side of Christ [Jn 19]
- | - the “Witnesses” in Sacramental order [1 Jn 5:6-8]
- | - The Feast of Tabernacles in the Apocalypse.

[2] The question of the Thirst of Christ can only be understood in its rich preparatory, accompanying and subsequent contexts.

[a] In a recent study ²⁶, it was noted that the rather “mystical” interpretation of this salvific mystery in the life of Christ has been for the most part abandoned by modern critical interpretation. Yet, paradoxically, an unexpected richness of this mystery of the earthy sojourn of Jesus has been uncovered.

[b] The ancients stressed very much the physical thirst of Christ, and perhaps a “spiritual” thirst - that for the souls of humanity. In this view, it was reasoned that the divine plan of redemption was to fulfill the ancient prophecies: in His thirst, they gave Him poison [cf. Ps 69:21], and He would be made to drink wormwood [cf. Lm 3:15]. The Lord’s thirst indeed fulfilled the Scriptures.

{1} The thirst, coming near the end, was one more atrocious suffering of Jesus. The great loss of liquids would have drained his vitality. Jesus conceivably would have suffered “dehydration.”

²⁶cf. Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, “La sete di Gesu’ moriente e l’interpretazione giovannea della sua morte in croce”, in: *La sapienza della croce oggi. Atti del Congresso Internazionale. Roma 13/18 ottobre 1975.* I. *La sapienza della croce nella rivelazione e nell’ecumenismo.* Leumann [Torino] LDC 1976, pp. 33- 49.

{2} The thirst, in this view, is also for the loss of souls - His thirst was for their salvation.

{3} There was also seen a kind of solidarity with the human race. the thirst of Jesus is for the height of all such suffering of human beings through the ages. In this scene, the thirst of Jesus is meant to teach the longing, a kind of nostalgia, for what comes later. This is a thirst for true wisdom ²⁷.

[3] Traditionally, then, there was great emphasis given to two interpretations of "thirst", present in the agony of Jesus:

- the physical thirst, evidently caused by the horrible ordeal to which he was subject. This would also serve to show the reality of His human nature and body. The reality of this agony would reject all Docetism.

- a spiritual thirst: this may have begun with St. Augustine and was continued in the writings of monastic circles. The corporal thirst of Jesus revealed the even deeper thirst for the redemption of the world - the yearning to apply the infinite divine mercy.

[4] Interpreters of John, though, appeal to his "symbolism". In addition to the "physical" thirst and the spiritual, or "mystical" thirst, great value is placed in seeking to penetrate Johannine symbolism, the theology of the author of the 4th Gospel ²⁸. Hence, thirst may also be seen to have a "symbolic" sense. This expresses in human terms:

- the yearning for the glory of the Father;
- this will involve returning to the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. A careful reflection on the contexts: immediate and more remote - in that which precedes, accompanies and follows the basic text of John, may offer a profound insight into the symbol of mercy.

1. Cana of Galilee [Jn 2:1-12]: one of the difficulties with this story is the sheer abundance of its symbolism to be interpreted. In this one passage, there is profound reflection for theology. This is the first of the signs that have as their

²⁷cf. St. Robert Bellarmine.

²⁸cf. Raymond Brown, "Crucial Questions in Johannine Theology - Ecclesiology - Sacramentology - Eschatology - Wisdom Motifs", in: *The Gospel of John i - xii*. Anchor Bible, Vol. 29, Garden City NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1966. Introduction, pp. cv-cxxvii.

purpose the revelation of the divine personality of Jesus. The faith of the followers of Jesus will be eventually brought to perfection.

Some would tie this Cana account in with the New Creation, but this idea may not be central. The emphasis seems more on eschatological replacement and fulfillment.

a. **The Woman**: Mary's role here and the title Jesus gives her also tie her in with Jesus' manner of addressing her on **Calvary**. She is presented as the model, believing, abandoned, handmaid of the lord - as He is the "Servant" of the Father [cf. Jn 19:25]. There is surely a symbolic importance in this exchange between Mary and Jesus.

1.] With the title "Woman" the reader is brought back first of all to Gn 3 and the "proto-evangelium", the promise of the "woman" whose seed will crushes the head of the serpent [cf. Gn 3:15].

2.] However, at the same time, one must reflect on the Woman of the Apocalypse. She, in profound symbolism, is a central personality in the mystery of Redemption. The Woman of the Apocalypse is to give birth to the Messiah [cf. Rv 12:5; Ps 2:9]. The "dragon" is so often associated with the Serpent of Genesis. Many would read the Woman of Rv 12 in a "collective" sense, but so often these figures are based on real human beings. In Genesis, the "woman" has been Eve, which serves as a spring-board for the Book of the Apocalypse.

3.] There are other possible connections: in Jesus' Farewell Discourse, He is addressing His own, deeply saddened by the prospect of His departure and their abandoning Him [cf. Jn 16:20, ff.]. He compares this to the suffering of a woman in childbirth - but, when new life has come into the world, there is universal rejoicing [cf. the "Cosmic Hope" of Rm 8]. Jesus' comparison is that this is the situation of the disciples now at the prospect of His leaving them. The true disciple will pass from grief to joy - and the basis of this joy is the new life that has come into the world.

a.] The sufferings of childbirth are often used as a symbol, or figure for the coming of the new times [cf. Ho 13:13, f.; Is 21:3; 26:17; 37:3; 66:7-9; MI 4:9, f.; 5:2]. Prophets applied this image to Israel's terrible misfortunes, the sufferings of the Messiah and the evils that would precede His coming. Isaiah, in particular, speaks of the "Woman", perhaps meaning Sion. However, there is also a parallel with the first "woman" after the fall, the promise was made that from her

seed would come one who would crush the head of the serpent. This “Woman” is eventually crowned with the stars [cf. Rv 12].

b.] John has used the same word comparing the sufferings of childbirth [cf. Jn 16:21], contrasting the lot of the first woman after the fall and the moral sufferings of the disciple. The “woman” in Jn’s treatment has both messianic and eschatological implications. There is the promise of the ultimate victory, and the joy without end. It is through Mary that these prophecies would be realized. She has brought to completion the incomplete role of Eve.

c.] A further connection with these early verses might be that at the birth of Eve’s child, she said: I have acquired a man with the help of God [cf. Gn 4:1]. It is not too far-fetched to think that the statement of Pilate: “This is the Man!” [cf. Jn 19:5] is the ultimate fulfillment of these beginnings. So, it can be concluded that “the difficult birth” presented in John [cf. 16:21, ff.] concerns also a reference to the past, as well as a prophecy of the Passion, Death, resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. His departure from this world will bring a joy that will know no end [cf. Jn 14:18, f., 28; 16:22].

4.] There are some points in the Cana story that are clear:

- Jesus does respond to the request of Mary and performs the first “sign”;
- despite Jesus’ apparent harshness, Mary nevertheless knew that Jesus would hear her. She gives the order to the disciples to do whatever He tells them - expressing in this way, her own response to God” its OT counterparts may be the OT story of Joseph - and do whatever you are told - and also Moses, who did all he was told [cf. Gn 41:55; Ex 35:1, 4, 10, 29; 36:1, 5; 38:1, 5, 7, 21, 22, 29, 31, 31, 39, 42, 43; 40:16, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32].
- the miracle has enormous importance - it offers the basis of a more profound acceptance of Jesus. Mary so often is presented in union with the disciples;
- there is an intimate tie between this passage, and Mary’s rediscovery of Jesus in John [cf. Jn 19:25, ff.].

5.] There may be something of a tie between John and the story recorded in Luke, of Jesus’ first words in that Gospel. When Jesus is “found” by His parents, He asks Mary why they had been looking for Him [cf. Lk 2:49] - and here, at Cana, Jesus asks her why she has “turned to” Him [cf. Jn 2:3, ff.].

6.] The whole story of Cana takes place at **a nuptial banquet** - a later symbol for the eternal sharing with the Trinity, and the promise of the Apocalypse [cf. Rv 19: 7, ff.; 21:2, 9]. The “banquet” also appears in Jesus’ parables with some

frequency [cf. Mt 22:1, ff.; 25:1, ff.; Lk 12:37; 22:156, ff.]. The efficacious intercession of Mary at Cana has been seen as a prelude of her eternal intercession in heaven.

b. Water:

1.] A Sacramental Reading: the Eucharistic symbolism of Cana is not always emphasized - some also have read Cana as an indication that Holy Matrimony is indeed a sacrament.

2.] The primary meaning of all this - even more immediate than the eternal nuptial symbolism would be the “new wine”, the gift of salvation brought by Jesus. When the water had been changed, there is some emphasis on the fact that the head-waiter ‘did not know’ from whence it came - this “not knowing” is a frequent theme in John [cf. 7:27,f.; 8:14; 9:29, f.; 19:9] - from the wound in the side, Thomas will come from not believing to faith.

3.] This precious gift of the wine is often the symbol of the eschatological times. Amos spoke of a return to Eden when the mountains would flow with new wine [cf. Am 9:13].

4.] Hoseah saw the abundance of grain, wine and oil as the answer the Lord will give to those who will respond to Him [cf. H 2:24].

5.] There will be wine and milk in the hills, promised Joel [cf. Jl 4:18].

6.] The “new wine” has been seen as both Sapiential and Eucharistic - themes that will return in Jn 6.

Summary

[1] The many symbols afforded here: water, bread, wine, as offered by John are read by many interpreters as the comprehensive gift of divine life, through the Holy Spirit, as promised so regularly in John [cf. 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40]. Eschatological salvation is so often uppermost in Jn’s mind.

[2] The possible parallels with the crucifixion and resurrection scenes here would be: the Woman, the Hour, the water, wine and the nuptial theme of the New Covenant. ²⁹.

2. The Woman of Samaria [Jn 4:1-42]: The main interest in this rather long discourse [42 verses] is once more the gradual revelation of the Personality of Jesus. In this passage, He goes from being a “man”, as the Woman of Samaria says He is - then she wonders if He might be the “Messiah” and finally, the People of Samaria, because they heard Him themselves, believed that indeed Jesus is “the Savior of the world.” The symbol that is prime interest here is the encounter at the well. Again, there are several parallels that might be projected both forward and backward to the OT [e.g., the Christmas story].

a. The Encounter at the Well: Jesus came to Jacob’s Well, tired from the journey, and thirsty, and He set down straight by the well. It was about the sixth hour [cf. Jn 4: 5, ff.].

1.] This whole matter seems both to be an anticipation and a ‘prolepsis’ of what is to take place on **Calvary**. The time of day, the exhaustion of Jesus will occur again, on Calvary. Furthermore, the fact of thirst is found three separate times [cf. vv. 3-15]. It does not seem that the woman has experienced this “thirst” of which Jesus speaks. She remains on a physical, material level - whereas, Jesus is telling her of something far more sublime.

2.] Once again, the woman “did not know” the source of the waters of which He spoke - nor did she know the Person Who was addressing her. Jesus’ thirst is to make known what it is that God is offering. Once more there is a reality of thirst, which serves as the spring-board for a much deeper understanding of the word. Anyone who would drink of the water that Jesus would offer, will never thirst again [v. 14].

3.] As has been seen, the symbolism that water provides is quite broad:

- it is associated with creation, redemption, purifying, slaking thirst, restoring life, ensuring fecundity - and, in brief, might simply mean the blessings of God;
- just referring quickly to the OT, it has broad application:

²⁹cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel of John, I - XII*, ib., pp. 97-111; cf. also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to John*. Herder’s Theological Commentary on the NT. NY: Herder and Herder 1968, Vol. I, pp. 323-340; cf. F. M. Braun, OP, *Jean le theologien. Sa theologie. Le Christ, notre Seigneur*. Vol. 3, 2. Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 95-108.

- God Himself [cf. Jr 2:13; 17:13 - the genuine cisterns;
- the River of Delights [cf. Ps 36:8];
- Wisdom, the Torah;
- the Spirit of God.

In the passage under consideration, “water” may summarize the entire OT tradition.

4.] As on Calvary, the thirst of Jesus is radically misunderstood: in fulfillment of the ancient Psalm, He is given vinegar in the place of water [cf. Ps 69:21]. The “misunderstanding” theme will invite every believer of good will to ponder more deeply. By the symbolism of water and His thirst, Jesus’ suffering adds considerably to the “content” of divine revelation. Within Jesus, there is the intense yearning to give the “living waters” to the Woman of Samaria - later on, this yearning will be to send the Holy Spirit [cf. Jn 19:30]. This parallelism is not to send the Holy Spirit [cf. Jn 19:30]. This parallelism is not perfectly established, but at least, it would make one ponder. In Jn 4, Jesus’ thirst is somewhat slaked when He communicates Himself to the Woman as the only Source of any possible happiness for her. In like manner, His thirst on Calvary ends when He “ex-spires”, sends out His Holy Spirit ³⁰.

5.] Therefore, in the encounter with the woman of Samaria, there is the promise and the bestowal of the Gift of God. The comparison is that of a source of living water, that flows into eternal life. Each one who receives these waters, becomes like a garden and will be gifted with a spring, whose waters never run dry [cf. Is 58:11]. Furthermore, going back to Sirach, there might also be in this idea a basis for the “missionary discourse”, which follows below: each one receiving these living waters must become, like the woman of Samaria, a Missionary: she put down the jar, and ran back to town [cf. v. 28]. In Sirach’s imagery, there is a comparison of wisdom to a conduit from a river, running into a garden, into the orchard. Teaching will pour forth like a broad sea [cf. Si 24: 30, ff.].

6.] The idea is that the Word of Jesus is not just a kind of “bind” for the sheaves, to hold one’s conduct up according to divine law. And John is not merely talking about material prosperity of the messianic times, or the wisdom of the doctors, metaphorically present in the fresh waters of the well.

7.] At least in some distant manner, there is a hint here of the inexhaustible Spirit: while not specifically mentioned in the story of the Woman of Samaria, this is the imagery that is in the offing in Jn 7. Jesus offers the Gift of the Father, which is the Holy Spirit, to believers.

³⁰cf. R. Schnackenburg, *ib.*, pp. 419-442, *passim*; cf. R. Brown, *The Gospel of John, I-XII* pp. 178-181.

8.] In Jn's own symbolism, the flowing water also implies a certain contentment, the achievement of the deepest yearning of the wayfarer. Jesus also clearly associates Baptism in water, and in the Spirit. John the Baptist had baptized in water, and Jesus fulfills that thorough sending of the Holy Spirit. In this colloquy with the Woman of Samaria, there is an orientation toward that Baptism in the Spirit. This leads to a Mission, as is evident in Jesus' conversation with His own disciples - in this He speaks of a mysterious food, that of doing the Father's Will [cf. v. 34] ³¹.

b. The Missionary Discourse: in the latter part of this Jn 4, there is the so-called "Scene Two", or the "Missionary Discourse."

1.] Jesus suggests that they look around, and that they will see that the fields are all ready for the harvest. Jesus offers a harvest that they had not worked for - and explains that it is the grain of eternal life [cf. Jn 4: 35, ff.].

2.] This text and particularly its context with the Woman of Samaria, has led many interpreters to see that the meeting at Jacob's Well is to be read in the light of the "New Covenant." In an earlier text, concerning purification [cf. Jn 3: 27, ff.], there was a dispute with a Jew about purification. The disciples of John the Baptist then went to him, and in his reply, he identifies Jesus with the Spouse, Whom he dearly loved. It is the well known passage that the spouse is for the bridegroom only. The Bridegroom's friend is glad in hearing His voice - perhaps a text from the Song of Songs [cf. 8:2]. So, the Friend of the Groom must decrease, while He must increase, as God has given to Him the fullness of the Spirit.

3.] This passage makes it possible to apply to the coming of Jesus to the entire tradition of the Espousals as the Covenant with God. Repeatedly in the old law this figure was alive:

- The Deuteronomist strove to have the Covenant established "this day", and spoke of the nuptial jealousy of God [cf. Dt 5: 2, ff.].

- Second Isaiah repeatedly referred to the nuptial theme, in that from now on, the Creator will be the Spouse, the Redeemer. The Lord calls back, will re-build, His forsaken wife [cf. Is 54: 5, ff.].

- Jeremiah recalls the early affection of Israel, the love of the bridal days, when the People followed the Lord through the wilderness [cf. Jr 11:15].

³¹cf. F. M. Braun, OP, ib., pp. 63, ff.; cf. id., *Jean le theologien. Sa theologie. Le mystere de Jesus-Christ*. Paris: Gabalda 1966, Vol. #, 1, pp. 90,ff.

- Ezekiel's extended nuptial metaphor, or allegory, on Israel's history, is the story of a sheik, or monarch, who finds an abandoned infant girl, still in the blood of her recent birth - picked up and saved by God [cf. Ezk 16].

- And Hoseah, from his own lived experience, is inspired to write about a new Covenant in nuptial terms. The promise is that God will betroth Himself to His People in great love and tenderness [cf. Ho 2: 21 ,ff.].

4.] In the gift of wine at the marriage festival of Cana [cf. Jn 2], there are initiated the New Times. The meeting now with the Woman of Samaria at the well can only call to mind their meetings of other times. The closer one studies the conversation of Jesus with the Woman, the more possible does it seem to bear some connection with Genesis:

- **Rebecca**, and her marriage with Isaac [cf. Gn24:12,ff.].

- **Rachel**, and her marriage with Jacob [cf. Gn 29:1, ff.].

There are striking parallels in these stories, with the account of John concerning the Woman of Samaria.

1.] **The Well**: perhaps this has been immortalized in the Song of Songs - this is the spring that brings life, this source of living water, flowing down from Lebanon [cf. Sgs 4:15], and the melting snows [?]. As would Tobit later, the confidant of Abraham is sent with Isaac into a far country to find a worthy spouse. The parallels are as follows:

- the servant of Abraham set out ...and at the time when the women go down to the well to draw water... [cf. Gn 24:10].

- and Jesus was on His way to a Samaritan town, and Jacob's well is there... [cf. Jn 4:5].

2.] **The Time of Day**: in the Genesis account, it was evening, at the time when the women go to draw water. The servant is at the well, and he is looking for a girl to come to draw water, and he will ask her for a drink [cf. Gn 24:11, 20,f., 43].

In Jn's account, it was about the 6th hour, and the Woman of Samaria came to draw water - and Jesus asks her for a drink.

3.] **The Offering of Gifts**: after the camels had drunk, the man gave the girl some gold bracelets [cf. Gn 24:22]. In Jn's account, Jesus tells the woman, if only she knew what it was that was being offered to her [cf. Jn 4:10].

4.] The Spreading of the Good News: the girl at the well ran home to tell all that happened [cf. Gn 24:28]. In a similar manner, the Woman of Samaria put down the jar and ran home - she spoke of a “man”, and wondered if indeed he were the Christ [cf. Jn 4:28, ff.]

5.] The Response of the “Hearers of the Word”: Laban runs from his home to meet the man at the well [cf. Gn 24:29, ff.]. In like manner, the people of Samaria started on their way toward Jesus. Many came to profess their faith in Jesus on the strength of what the woman had said [cf. Jn 4:30, 39].

6.] The Conviction is ultimately from God: Laban’s response is that the servant is indeed “blessed of God” [cf. Gn 24:31]. And the people of Samaria profess their “theological” faith - no longer on the strength of the woman’s testimony, but on His: He really is the Savior of the world! [cf. Jn 4:42] ³².

Summary

[1] There are interpreters who see a clear connection between **Jn 4 and Ac 8**: the origins of the Apostolic Mission as going beyond the confines of the Jewish People ³³.

[2] Along with the parallels, there are also clear differences between the great women of the times of the Patriarchs, and the Woman of Samaria:

[a] Rebecca clearly belongs to the legitimate descendency from Abraham [cf. Gn 24:4, 24, 37,f.] - whereas the Woman of Samaria pertains to a “despised” population in the Jewish mind [cf. Jn 4:9].

[b] This anti-Samaritan feeling is forcefully brought forward by Sirach: there are two nations that are detested, and the third is **Lo-ammi** , not My people: the inhabitants of Seir, the Philistines and the “stupid people” of Shechem [cf. Si 50:25, ff.].

[c] Furthermore, Rebecca is a virgin of irreproachable conduct [cf. Gn 24:16, 43] - whereas the woman of Samaria has had five husbands. Some interpreters believe it is probable that John also has in mind here the divinities of the five tribes transplanted into Samaria by the Assyrians [cf. 2 K 17:24, ff.].

³²cf. F. M. Braun, OP, Vol. 3/1, pp. 93-95, passim.

³³cf. R. P. Martin, *NT Foundations. A Guide for Christian Students*. Vol. 2. *Acts-Revelations*. Exeter: Paternoster Press 1978, pp. 83-91, “Stephen, the Hellenists and the Early Gentile Mission.”

[3] In the conversations, then, with the woman of Samaria, this OT background might be considered. It is to these unfaithful people that the promise of an integral and just betrothal is promised. They will be espoused to the Lord with fidelity, and in this, they will come to “know” Him [cf. Ho 2:21, ff.].

[4] The unfaithful woman of Samaria, despite her disorder, will eventually come to “know” Jesus, the awaited Messiah. There is in this a kind of reconciliation for one who had been dissident. Long before, in Ezechiel’s prophecy, there is a promise of all this: when the Lord decried the infidelity of the Israelites, the Prophet stated: ‘your elder sister is Samaria’, who lives with her daughters. the Lord promised to restore ‘Samaria and her daughters’ [cf. Ezk 16:45-62]. The Lord has promised to renew the Covenant with the united People of God.

[5] The adding on of the Samaritans to the Christian community was of great importance, as is read in Ac: the day that the bitter persecution of the Church broke out in Jerusalem. While the Apostles remained there, others fled, and went from place to place, preaching the Word of God. Among these places that were evangelized, were also a number of Samaritan villages [cf. Ac 8:4-25 0- cf. the “Good Samaritan” Parable.

[6] The final conclusion of Jn’s story of the Woman of Samaria is that the Covenant was indeed extended far beyond the home tribe of Judah. In the Samaritans’ profession of faith, the true dimensions of Jesus’ coming is expressed: in simple terms, He is the Savior of the world! [cf. Jn 4:42].

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3. The Bread of Life [cf. Jn 6:35]:

- a. The Church Fathers noted a great contrast between Jn 6 and Gn 3:
 - in Gn 3:6 : do not eat of the fruit of the tree, or you will die! - And Jn reverses that: If one eats the bread that comes down from heaven, he/she will never die! [cf. Jn 6:50];
 - - Adam, in partaking of the fruit of the tree, brings death into the world - and Jesus promises eternal life [cf. Jn 6:51];

- Adam is driven out of the Garden [cf. Gn 3:24] - and Jesus promises always a welcome to those who will come to Him [cf. Jn 6:37]

b. Therefore, many themes interweave in this Jn 6. Jesus' ability to walk on water here [cf. Jn 6:16-21] may be an effort to call to mind the fact that Jesus, as Son of God, shares in the Father's sovereignty over the water - both in the Exodus [cf. Ps 77:19; 78:24] - and a New Creation theme.

c. Jn 6 seems to be an incident from another Passover, so His discourse is on the Bread of Life. As hunger and thirst were often joined in the Exodus times, John might be united them here. In Il-Is there was the promise that God's people would not hunger or thirst again, and the One Who pities them, would lead them to the streams of water [cf. Is 49:10].

d. In this passage, there is a parallel between the one who "comes" to Jesus, and the one who "believes" in Him. And the parallel in the verse of interest to the symbolism of water is: that Jesus is indeed the Bread of Life - whoever comes to Him, will never be hungry - and whoever believes in Him, will never thirst [cf. Jn 6:35]. As in the other passages from Jn concerning water and thirst, here, too, they may be considered on different levels.

e. Without entering into minute details, this whole discourse can be understood either Eucharistically, or Sapientially - i.e., the "Bread" can be understood either as Jesus' "doctrine", or the Blessed Sacrament - or both. Both interpretations find good support in the text.

1.] Sapiential Interpretation: Jesus presents Himself with the end in mind of being accepted - that His hearers "come" to Him, believe in Him [cf. Jn 6:35-37, 40, 44, f. 47]. A very close parallel with the "Bread of Life" would be the "living waters", also a symbol for divine revelation, knowledge about God. The Wisdom tradition often couples these ideas: wisdom will nourish one with the bread of understanding, and impart the water of learning [cf. Si 15:3].

In the promise of the Messianic times, Il-Is's concluding Chapter opens with the urgent invitation to come to the water, all who are thirsty. There is the invitation to corn, wine and milk [cf. Is 55:1, ff.] - and the **Banquet Theme** is once again in the fore [cf. Is 25:6, ff.]. Il-Is speaks of the rain and the snow as watering the earth, and giving it an abundant yield - and explicitly compares this to the Word of God which does not return to the Lord empty [cf. Is 55:10, ff.].

2.] Eucharistic Interpretation: the context of Jn 6 is the Passover, and the chapter opens with the multiplication of the bread [cf. 6:1-15] - a miracle not totally divorced from the changing of the water into wine at Cana. Jesus identifies Himself with the OT Manna - He is indeed the Bread of Life³⁴.

f. Jn 6 would identify this “two-fold Table of the Lord” - that of His Word, and the Bread of Heaven - this is also noted in the story of Emmaus, and in *The Imitation of Christ*, BC IV, c. 11.

g. Jesus had already stated that His food is to do the Will of His Father [cf. Jn 4:34]. In other words, His whole existence is centered on the One who has sent Him. There is great affinity here with Hebrews [cf. 10:5, ff.] - He has been consecrated and sent into this world to do the Will of His Father [cf. Jn 10:36], and for this He will also consecrate Himself [cf. Jn 17:19]. The “heart” of the mystery of Redemption is Jesus’ loving obedience to His Father ³⁵.

h. “Living Water”, then, is just one of Jesus’ symbols to describe His gifts. The Bread from Heaven also helps to understand the implications of the “Living Water” in the context of Jn 6. to “know” Jesus, is to know His gift - in Him, there can be no authentic acceptance of His gifts, without at the same time “coming” to Him. There is no confusion in Jesus’ teaching between the God of the Blessings and the blessings of God. The gifts of redemption that Jesus brings ask for a return for His Word, His Eucharist. Every reception of Him asks for a true “believing” in Him, a more profound “coming” to Him ³⁶.

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4. The Discourse for the Festival of Tabernacles

a. Once again, the parallel may be instituted: to “thirst” for Jesus is answered by “coming” to him - to “drink” means to “believe” in Him. To “drink” is to “come to Jesus” - “to be thirsty” means “to have faith.” Specifically here Jesus identifies “the fountains of living water” with the Spirit [cf. v. 39]. There is a distinction between the “time of Jesus” with all the verbs in the present case. But when He speaks of the Spirit, the tense changes toward the future. The faith that depends on “signs” must give way to that faith based on the coming of the Spirit.

³⁴cf. R. Brown, ib. pp. 272-280.

³⁵cf. R. Schnackenburg, Vol. I, pp. 446, ff.

³⁶ib., pp. 427, ff.

b. It is not exaggerated, then, to see in John a gradual build-up, with these various passages concerning water: from Cana, to Samaria, the Bread of Life - right through the opening of the Side of Christ on Calvary. The Festival of Tabernacles is the Renewal of the Covenant and the coming of the Spirit. The streams of living water that flow from His side on Calvary will mean the coming of the Spirit, Who comes as Jesus “ex-spires.”

c. On this Feast of Tabernacles, once again Jesus initiates a Discourse on the thirst for the living waters. On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus expresses His deepest sentiments concerning thirst - not as explicit as He did in His Discourse with the Woman of Samaria, nor as He would on Calvary [cf. Jn 19:28]. Yet, even here, Jesus expresses His “thirst” - He yearns that His invitation be accepted, and that His listeners would “come to Him”, “believe” in Him and in the Father’s Plan of Mercy.

d. Much like the situation at Jacob’s well, Jesus indeed yearned to communicate the “Living water”. On this Festival of Tabernacles, Jesus more explicitly introduces the coming era of the Holy Spirit. He promises an Advocate, who likewise will not say His “own word”, but will remind the Church of all that Jesus has said [cf. Jn 14:25, ff.]. There will be a gradual coming to the complete truth - yet, the Spirit will only say what He in His turn has “learned”. His will be a “prophetic” reminder, a mixture of the teachings of Jesus, as these will be realized in future times. Everything that the Spirit will say will be taken from the store of Jesus’ teachings [cf. Jn 16:13, ff.].

e. Here, then, on this Festival of Tabernacles, Jesus goes beyond the theme of thirst, and that of the Living Water. Here He specifically introduces the Discourse about the Holy Spirit, thereby explaining an important element in the symbolism. All the way along, then, John presents the themes of “thirst” and “water” on several levels. This will lead the close observer to the conclusion that the thirst on Calvary is not merely physical, which would be expected because of Jesus’ physical ordeal. Likewise, the streams of “living water” that flow from the side of the deceased Christ will have profound biblical connections. On Calvary, Jesus will be identified with the “thirsty” of all times: the thirst of Israel in the desert, the quest and searching of those sincerely seeking the truth and goodness. In His thirst, Jesus wants to respond to the deepest yearnings of the human heart, by sending the Holy Spirit of God. His People will gradually be led to the fullness of Truth ³⁷.

³⁷cf. Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, pp. 39-42.

f. In an effort to summarize the sublime doctrinal content of this brief passage concerning the "living waters" on the Feast of Tabernacles [cf. Jn 7:37-39], the following four points may be considered ³⁸:

1.] As Scripture says: there is no precise text that the Evangelist has in mind here - rather than looking for some specific text, it seems that "the scriptures" have prepared for this moment in their totality. So much in the life of Jesus is "so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" ³⁹. rather than indicating any lack of Jesus' knowledge of the Scriptures, this statement of His would seem to indicate a profound knowledge of the central biblical themes. what is present here can vary well be an OT insight, that will shed much light on the reading of the Wounded Side of Jesus in Jn 19.

a.] The Second Exodus Miracle: there is implicit here a kind of "second story" of redemption - after dividing the Red Sea so that Israel could pass, the Lord split the rock, and water gushed forth [cf. Ex 17:1, ff.; Nb 2:11; Is 48:15]. This miracle was also sung in Israel's "Historical Psalms":

- Ps 78: "The Lessons of Israelite History" - this Psalm presents this in dynamic fashion: splitting the rocks, quenching their thirst with limitless water, bringing streams out of rock, water in torrents [cf. vv. 15, ff.].

- Ps 105: "The Wonderful History of Israel" - brings the manna of the desert, and the water from the rock together. After the Lord satisfied His People with the quail and the bread, He opened the rock, and water poured forth like a river [cf. vv. 40, ff.].

b.] The Water of the New Covenant: it is through the cleansing streams of fresh water that Ezechiel envisioned the establishment of a new and deeper relationship of life between God and His People [cf. Ezk 37:25, ff.]. After the vision of the "Field of the Dry Bones", and the restoration of Israel to new life, the Prophet speaks of the creation of a "new heart", and the communication of a new spirit. Ezechiel brings together the fountains of living water, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord God, through His Word and His Spirit, will bring about a new heavens and a new earth, a totally New Creation.

³⁸For what follows, cf. F. M. Braun, OP, Vol. 3/2, pp. 50-56, passim.

³⁹cf. C.H. Dodd, "The NT as the Fulfillment of the OT", in: *The Authority of the Bible*. Glasgow: Collins Fount Paperbacks 1978, pp. 194-211; cf. C.F. D. Moule, "The Fulfillment Theme in the NT", in *The Origin of Christianity*. Cambridge/London/New York/ Melbourne: Cambridge University Press 1978, pp. 127-134.

c.] **The New Eden:** that results from the water on the right of the Temple [cf. Ezk 47:1-12]. The stream flows eastward, and becomes a river - and everywhere this stream goes, it restores health. There is an explosion of new life. the fruit trees bear fruit each month - and when their fruit is consumed, the remaining leaves have curative powers.

[1] Here, water symbolizes the sanctifying renewal of the Spirit, in prophecy. this "Return to Eden" will be picked up by the last book of Scripture [cf. Rv 22:1 ff.]. When Ezechiel was trying to warn the People about the impending punishment of God, he did so in terms of water. He repeatedly predicted the times that the Israelites would 'measure' their water consumption - it will be so scarce that they will drink it 'grudgingly' [cf. Ezk 4: 16, ff.] - in great anxiety, even fear, will they drink the little that may be allotted to them [cf. Ezk 12:1, ff.]. The indication of divine 'wrath' will be that the land will receive no rain, no showers [cf. Ezk 17:5, ff.].

[2] Ezechiel describes the "good times" showing the choice of God of the abandoned Bedouin baby girl - taking her home, washing her of her defilement [cf. Ezk 16:4, 9]. Another image is that Israel was a vine shoot, planted near the abundant streams [cf. Ezk 19:9, ff.]. In the allegory of the cedar, the Prophet presents this tree as the "envy of very tree in Eden". The waters made it grow tall and straight, and the rivers poured round where it was planted [cf. Ezk 31:1, ff.].

[3] All of this was lost, but in the image of the New Temple, one is brought back to the original abundance. There is a hint of the original Eden, with its four rivers inundating and freshening the whole world. It is this water that gives possibility to the trees heavy with fruit, and the teeming life of the universe. The entire vision is a symbolic one: prosperity has returned to the Promised Land with redemption, the New Creation. The NT will make extensive use of the New Creation theme, and the clean water of the New Covenant - especially in the Baptismal symbolism. In this, the fusion of the fresh water and the spirit of God is most pronounced ⁴⁰.

[4] Ezechiel, then, produces the New Spirit to inspire hope into the discouraged hearts of the exiles. The People will be purified and

⁴⁰cf. J. Steinmann, *Le prophète Ezechiel et les debuts de l'exil*. Paris: duCerf. Lectio Divina 13, 1953, pp. 228-230.

restored and renewed - the Spirit as a new “breath” and the fresh water bringing new life ⁴¹.

d.] The New People: the prophets Isaiah [cf. I 65:17, ff.] and Ezechiel [cf. 36:25, ff.] make of the re-birth of the sinful Israel a central theme in their preaching. There is an over-lapping of very evident “cosmic joy” that results when the wayward People return to their God. They will have a “single heart” and a “new spirit”, they will be God’s “beloved” [cf. Ezk 11:17, ff.].

An unknown Psalmist sees this all as a result of the Breath of God, from which new life begins, renewing the world [c. Ps 104:30]. In the “First Creation”, the Creator breathed life into the speck of dust. And now, in the “New Creation”, fresh life will be communicated by God ⁴².

e.] The Eschatological Source of Cleansing Water [cf. Zc 13:1; 14:8] : this water will flow all summer and winter, to the Eastern sea and to the Western sea. Perhaps this use of paired extremes would be a poetic manner of expressing totality [*binomes de totalite'*].

Summary

[1] These, then, are some of the images and symbols that would come to mind from Jesus’ expression: “as Scripture says”. It does not seem that Jesus was quoting one, or more texts - but, that there is brought here a most skillful interweaving of complementary symbols:

- Genesis and the New Creation;
- Exodus, the dividing of the sea, and the obtaining water from the rock;
- the Prophets, particularly Isaiah, Ezechiel, and Zechariah, and their themes of “living water”, the Spirit and the New Covenant.

[2] All of these elements will come to bear in the Crucifixion scene and in the Resurrection appearances of Jesus.

[3] Perhaps even more simply and comprehensively, the setting of the Discourse on the Living water offers a profound biblical insight. The Feast of Tabernacles has

⁴¹cf. G. Montague, *The Holy Spirit - Growth of a Biblical Tradition - A Commentary on the Principal Texts of the OT and the NT*. New York/Paramus/Toronto: Paulist Press 1976, pp. 45,ff.

⁴²cf. Louis Jacquet, Vol. 3, pp. 91, ff.

deep OT roots. Jewish scholarship ⁴³ indicates some of the possible readings for the old festival of the autumn harvest - that might also have been the time of such Covenant Renewal [cf. S. Mowinckel]. This festival, in which water was of such importance surely would have leaned on the Book of Consolation: water will be poured out on thirsty soil, as the Spirit of God on Israel's descendants. They will spring up like poplars near the running streams of freshwater [cf. Is 43:3, ff.]. Jeremiah would remind the worshippers each year that the Lord was Himself the Fountain of Living Water, and that He was not to be abandoned [cf. Jr 1:13]. The "old stand-by", Deuteronomy, re-presented the desert experience to generations of Israelites, reminding them not to forget the Lord Who had bought their ancestors through a vast and terrible place, and obtained water for them from the hardest rock [cf. Dt 8:11, ff.].

[4] The Feast of Tabernacles, like every 'memorial', went in two directions: He was speaking of the Spirit ... whoever is thirsty ... As Scripture says...from His Breast...

[a] Historical: the Festival was renewed each year, and the Israelites were reminded to live out in shelters as their ancestors had done generations before. In this way, all through the years, the Israelites were brought to "know" that the Lord had brought them out of the land of slavery [cf. Lv 23:39, ff.].

[b] Eschatological: every festival was a promise. At the end of time, in the view of II-Zc, the Israelites, and all, will go up to the Holy City to worship the kingship of the Lord, and all will keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The Lord will be king of the whole world [cf. Zc 14:9, 16].

2.] 'He was speaking of the Spirit' [cf. Jn 7:39]

a.] There is an abundance of Exodus typology present, but this seems to be more spiritualized by the presentation of II-Is. As water on thirsty soil, and streams on the dry ground, so the Spirit of the Most High will pour out on the children of Israel [cf. Is 44:3]. The water is placed in the wilderness, to show the "New Creation" miracle that Israel might sing His praises [cf. Is 43:20] and put its life in accord with this worship.

b.] The Spirit will indeed "pour out" over the citizens of the Promised Land. These waters will be present and "alive" in all seasons of the year, at

⁴³cf. Philip Goodman, *The Sukkot and Simhat Torah Anthology*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publications Society of America 5733/1973.

both extremities of the year [cf. Zc 14:8]. Out from the House of David, the Holy City will be purified and bathed. The New Jerusalem will be the center of holiness and the ways of Yahweh. The transformation achieved by these waters will be a sublime change, deep within.

c.] This fresh water is the gift of the Lord's salvation - for Jn, the Spirit is presented as the object of intense expectancy [cf. Jn 7:38], whose task will be sublimely personal [cf. Jn 16:7]. This "coming" of the Spirit can only be achieved by Jesus' going back to the Father, through His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. The plan of infinite mercy of God costs the Son dearly, and rewards the adopted sons and daughters richly, for indeed, He is "rich in kindness." Therefore, Jesus has specifically identified the "living waters" here with the Holy Spirit.

3.] **'Whoever is thirsty ... come and drink' [cf. Jn 7:37, ff.]:**

a.] Jn's rather "generic" appeal to "Scripture" seems to indicate that with the Spirit promised, indeed the "Last Times" have come. The "thirst" then, of Scripture has profound roots and implications. Agonizing thirst was threatened in a number of instances:

- the unfaithful spouse will be reduced to a wasteland and will perish of thirst [cf. Ho 2:5];
- the cities will go staggering, looking for water to slake their thirst [cf. Am 4:8];
- the high and the mighty will be devoured by hunger, and the lowly will be devoured by thirst. Once again, the "extremes" of society are mentioned to indicate its totality [cf. *binomes de totalite'*] [cf. Is 5:13];
- those struggling through the day with a terrible thirst may dream that they have found the streams of fresh water - but will awaken to the same agonizing thirst [cf. Is 29:8].

b.] While there is such repeated and graphic descriptions of the need for water in so many levels of Israel's history, one might attempt some kind of "classification" of these thirsts:

- there is no doubt that the experience itself was indeed a physical agony experienced a number of times by the People itself, and perhaps often by unknown biblical writers, whose compositions and descriptions have come down to us;
- but, the Prophets spoke of a hunger and thirst for the Word of God. Sometimes this was placed as a kind of threat - that after extended infidelity, they would indeed go looking for guidance from the Lord, and the Word would not be found [cf. Am 8:11];

- beyond the Word, the Spirit and all the images, there is also deeply with the heart of humanity, the natural quest for good and for truth. The yearning for God, for His Temple, is found in the panting, thirsting doe [cf. Ps 42]; or the lonely exile, the Levite perhaps, yearning for the Lord like thirsty ground [cf. Is 63], perhaps with nuptial overtones; there is also the humble and ardent prayer of the other Psalmist who compares himself to thirsty ground and begs for God to tech His Will. This Psalmist prays with great ardor for the good spirit to lead him to level ground [cf. Ps 143:6].

c.] To keep hope alive, so many time the gifted writers of long ago wrote of the Lord sending water gushing into the ravines, transforming the forbidding wastelands into a most inviting garden, with the renewal of the miracle of the first Creation. The blessings will be on both the Land and the People:

	{LandAbraham
Promise	}
	{Progeny.....David

- the land: once more the desert will be irrigated - even though right now it is without water [cf. Is 41:18]. This means more than abundant harvests, and mere material blessings;

- the People: the “wretched of the earth”, the “Poor whom Yahweh loves”, will look for water, and the Lord will provide it. These are not just the economically “poor” - but means those who truly seek the Lord, with all their heart, mind and strength.

d.] With this literal “flood” of texts, Jn’s symbolism of the “Living water” and “Thirst” goes far beyond the physical aspect. The great evangelist of the Incarnation begins with a well know physical agony, and draws his readers upward to higher levels. Jn would unite the natural thirst of creaturehood for fulfillment, and the Spirit of Truth that is sent by God. Ezechiel [cf. 36:25, ff.] had united the aspersion of pure water with the inner renewal of the heart of Israel, and the outpouring of the Spirit. The “hearts of stone” should be removed, and the risk of a “heart of flesh” would be implanted: only the “weak” are able to accept the strength of God. The Spirit will be commissioned with the special task of slaking the natural and life-long thirst for the truth within human beings. Jn is gradually leading the “thirsty” to faith in the divine person of Jesus Christ. The Spirit has been seen descending upon Him [cf. Jn 1:33], and God has bestowed the Spirit upon Him without limit [cf. Jn 3:34, ff.].

4.] **'From His Breast' [cf. Jn 7:38]**

a.] Rather than looking back, this verse seems to be projecting forward. Keeping in mind the missionary implications present in the episode of the Woman of Samaria, these "Living waters", then, will flow from deep within all those who have been refreshed by them. Jesus had explained that the Living Waters that He would give would become a spring within each of those who would come to Him and believe in Him, welling up to eternal life [cf. Jn 4:10, ff.]. The "Living waters", therefore, became a source of new life, as these flow out from the believer.

b.] Here Jesus clearly offers the Living waters to those who thirst. It is in Jesus that the symbols of the New Creation and the New Exodus are realized. From deep within Jesus will come on those waters that permit true life. By receiving from Him, by being satisfied by these "Living Waters", in turn, does each believer become a source of New Life.

c.] The Spirit will come only following the glorification of the Son, in His return to the Father. This will always presuppose the reality of Calvary and the great promise of the Resurrection. By being imbued with these mysteries, and by modeling one's life upon them, does the believer likewise become a kind of source of living water.

Summary

[1] This Discourse of Tabernacles offers a fitting commentary of an ancient tradition. Rain for the Festival was always a good omen. The Feast was always celebrated with "water processions", up through the "Water Gate" into the Temple. The symbols of Tabernacles would be carried in procession: branches indicting the huts of old, and some hint of the harvest garnered. The motifs here are "wisdom", acceptance of the Revelation of God's Word, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Just as manna really was the Bread of Heaven, and that Jesus was that living bread, so the water is a symbol of the Spirit that the resurrected Jesus will give. When Jesus "ex-spires", blood and water will flow "from His breast". The Tabernacles Discourse offers profound insights into divine revelation and the coming of the Spirit. Interpreters also seem symbolized here the sacrament of Baptism ⁴⁴.

[2] Jesus Himself is the fulfillment of the hopes of the Pilgrim People of God. Just as :in the beginning", God created heaven and earth - before this, the Word "was, was with God, was God!". He, then, is the Source of the New Creation, the new

⁴⁴cf. R. Brown, ib., pp. 326-329, passim.

ground from which the streams of living water flow. In receiving Him, one indeed can in some way serve as a source of Living Water - but, the text basically presents Jesus Christ as the Source of Living Water ⁴⁵.

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III.] THE STIGMATA OF GOOD FRIDAY

Presentation

[1] As the 4th Gospel presents Jesus as the Light shining through the darkness [cf. Jn 1:4] - as "in the beginning" the first creation presents the light first -- there is ominously apparent that the role of Jesus will be a difficult one. As Jn shows on the one hand that different people receive a gradual understanding into the personality of Jesus, there is at the same time an increasing animosity that appears against Him [cf. Jn 4:1; 5:18; 7:19,f., 30, 43-51; 8:48, f.; 10:31; 11:8, 16, 50, 57]. The "Light of the World" is very clearly seen in some kind of conflict with the "Powers of Darkness."

[2] The Sacrifice of Redemption which culminates on Calvary has a gradual development in Jn's Gospel. This can be seen by presenting the hints as the chapters unfold - which indicate clearly that **Jn 19** is a kind of climax to these various threats on the human existence of Jesus. But all of this unfolds "in accord with the Scriptures."

[3] There may be noticeable a kind of symbolic order from the lower levels of existence to the higher - from the vague to the more specific - as may be noted in the following panorama manifests itself, with Jn using his own order:

- the grain of wheat thrown into the ground to die [cf. 12:24];
- 'one should die', in the unwitting prophecy of Caiphas [cf. 11:50, ff.];
- the oblation of the Good Shepherd [cf. 10:11, ff.];
- the 'only-begotten', the fulfillment of the offering of Isaac [cf. 3:16; Rm 8:32];
- Jesus' Self-oblation, or "consecration" [cf. 17:19].

1. Jesus as the 'Lamb' - 'Servant' - 'Son' of God [cf. Jn 1:29, 36]:

⁴⁵cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*. Vol. 2, New York: The Seabury Press. A Crossroad Book 1980, pp. 152-157, passim.

a. Very early in Jn's Gospel, Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb of God". The Paschal Lamb, the daily sacrificial lamb, symbol of innocence, serves as an apt figure for the innocent Suffering Servant of God. In the early Church, Jesus was commonly designated in this way.

b. The parallels are evident, as would appear from any analysis of the four Canticles of the Servant. The Servant is introduced as the "chosen", the "beloved" [cf. Is 42:1, ff.]. He has been called to be the Light of the world [cf. Is 49:1, ff.]. He has been called for the "wearied", and provided with a disciple's tongue, each day hearing the Word of God [cf. Is 50:4, ff.]. In the 4th and most important Cantic [cf. Is 52:13-53:12], Jesus is "[pierced through]" and by His wounds, all of our wounds are healed. He offers His life as [*asham*], the Holocaust of Atonement.

c. Some authors discuss the possibility that when John the Baptist said: 'there is the Lamb of God', he could have meant "Servant", or "Son" of God, in that the word used - *talya* - might have been translated in these three ways⁴⁶. John the Baptist's announcement, early in the 4th Gospel, seems to have been that Jesus was being proclaimed. The imminent advent of the Judge of the Last Times was indicated - and the apocalyptic figure of the Lamb is applied to the Person of the Messiah, King and Judge - Jesus Christ.

d. Further, in the 4th Gospel, the proclamation of the Lamb had the specific purpose of introducing a paschal setting. This would automatically bring to mind a list of themes to be applied to the Paschal Lamb:

- It has been said that the Festival of the Pasch is found nine times in Jn's Gospel [2:13,33; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:4]. This Festival truly permeates the entire life and ministry of Jesus.

- Paschal elements are particularly evident, as has been seen, in the culminating Mystery of the Redemption:

- Jesus is put to death at the very hour [cf. Ex 12:6; Nb 9:2, ff.] when the paschal lambs, meant for the festive meal, were being immolated;

- the careful avoidance of the "crurifragium", the breaking of the legs of Jesus [cf. Jn 19:32, ff.], and this was substituted for by the extremely real, and symbolic piercing of the side of Jesus [cf. Ex 12:46; Nb 9:12];

⁴⁶This possibility is discussed by F.M.Braun, OP, *Jean le theologien. Les grands traditions d'Israel l'accord des Ecritures d'apres le quatrieme evangile*. Paris: Gabalda 1964, Vol. 2, pp. 69-86.

- in Jn's Gospel, Jesus is clearly the New Temple: 'He was speaking of the sanctuary of His Body; [cf. Jn 2:19, ff.] ⁴⁷.

e. With all this, then, the Mystery of Redemption might be seen in this light:

- **A New Exodus:** the Israelites of old had been saved by the blood of the Paschal Lamb. These sacrificial animals were seen to have a "propitiatory value". There was a passage from darkness into the light [cf. Jn 8:21]; from slavery into service [cf. Jn 8:32, ff.]; from death to eternal life [cf. Jn 5:25]. Furthermore, in Jn, the Exodus symbols are most evident: the bronze serpent [[cf. Jn 3:14]; the manna [Jn 6]; the source of living water from the rock [cf. Jn 7:38]; the column of fiery cloud [cf. Jn 8:12] - and the Paschal Lamb of Redemption.

- **The New Covenant:** the wisdom tradition explains that the first Passover night had been foretold: this would inspire trust in the pilgrims, and allow them to have joyful courage [cf. Ws 18:6].

f. The death of Jesus as the Paschal Lamb, and the Grain of Wheat would unite the Mystery of Redemption to the spring of the year, and the **Festival of the Passover**. Jesus, with the pierced side, and the streams of living water flowing from His side would associate the Mystery of Redemption with **the Festival of Tabernacles**, and the harvest of the grape. the death and resurrection of Jesus have obtained the "passing over" from the darkness of slavery and death into the freedom of service and of life.

2. The Immolation of the Only-Begotten [cf Jn 3:16, cf. Rm 8:32]:

a. The memory of the oblation of Isaac was kept alive particularly on the Festival of Passover. Jn puts it simply when he writes that God loved the world so very much that He offered up His Only--begotten, and much loved Son [cf. Jn 3:16]. The early Church was much taken up by this thought - as Paul had written to the romans that God did not spare His only Son, but offered Him up.

b. It should be admitted that indeed there is relatively little reflection on the comparison between Christ and Isaac ⁴⁸. The passages from both Paul and John

⁴⁷cf. R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple*. London: Oxford University Press 1969; G.A. Barrois, *Jesus Christ and the Temple*. Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1980.

⁴⁸cf. however R. LeDeaut, *La nuit pascale*. Rome: Institut Biblique Pontificale 1963, pp. 133-213. cf. also James Swetnam, SJ, *Jesus and Isaac*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, Analecta Biblica 94, 1981.

seem to be based on the mystery of the oblation of Isaac by Abraham, under divine command. The aged patriarch was directed by God to take his “only child”, “the one whom he loved”, and to go to Moriah - the future site of Israel’s Temple. There Isaac was to be offered as a holocaust - but, at the last moment, the angel of the Lord intervened [cf. Gn 22:2-12].

- c. There are striking parallels between Genesis and the 4th Gospel:
 - it was the only son offered in holocaust;
 - it was the son in whom the promises of the Covenant depended;
 - the Covenant, in some way, was to flow from the sacrifice of this son.

d. The NT Tradition does mention the offering of the “only, the most beloved” [cf. Heb 11:17, ff.]. The sacrifice that was asked of Abraham was one of totality. In the NT, Jesus Himself is presented as making this offering: He comes Himself to obey the Will of the Father [cf. Heb 10:5, ff.].

e. Hebrews and Romans are close to John in spirit - but it is the 4th Gospel [cf. Jn 3:16] which closely captures the OT spirit: God indeed gave up His only-begotten and much loved Son. The full acceptance on the part of Christ is also much emphasized by John [an aspect also underlined in the OT texts, but very much a part of the Rabbinic Aqedah]. This Rabbinic tradition places Isaac as an adult, and he lays down willingly on the altar - a particular that the OT does not include.

f. The willingness of Jesus may be seen in His overall choice to carry out the father’s will [cf. Jn 10:17, ff.] - especially in the Good Shepherd theme. Repeatedly it is shown that Jesus was taken in charge, was bound, seized [cf. Jn 18:12-24; 19:17, ff.].

g. Whether or not John was influenced by the extra-biblical Rabbinic tradition, can be left to the experts. The emphasis that the 4th Gospel seems to make is the offering which Abraham made, and the offering which the Son of God made of Himself. Nonetheless John could very well be trying to show that the oblation of Jesus was far above the Rabbinic tradition’s presentation of Isaac offering himself.

h. Isaac is not explicitly identified with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah - yet, perhaps through the title “Beloved”, this comes to light. Along with the title **Monogenes** - [Only-begotten], Isaac is also described as “Beloved” - **Agapetos** - [cf.

Gn 22:2,12,16]. In Jn [cf. 1:14, 18; 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9]. there seems to be an over-lapping of these to titles in reference to Jesus Christ ⁴⁹.

i. While the Suffering Servant may defy any explicit textual mention, yet the traits of the Suffering Servant do call Isaac to mind. The life of Isaac is offered, and God accepts the oblation. The Servant eventually is immolated as a Lamb [cf. Is 53:7; Gn 22:7]. The death of the Servant is indeed “in Atonement.” [cf. Is 53:10].

3. The Good Shepherd [cf. Jn 10]

a. With even greater clarity, the symbolism here presents a very well OT type. Here, there is great emphasis on His “call” [cf. Jn 10:3, ff., 20], and on His willingness to offer Himself [v. 11]. This “oblation” of His is totally free. In Trinitarian terms, the Father “loves” the Son because He carries out the Mission of obedience to the Divine will of merciful Redemption. In Good Shepherd terms, the Father loves Him because He lays down His life for the sheep.

b. The Shepherd symbolism surely goes back to the Pierced One of Zechariah [cf. Zc 10:3; 11:15, ff.] - and goes forward to the scene on Calvary. It is after the death of Jesus that John applies the prophecy to Him [cf. Jn 19:27] - whereas the Synoptics present Jesus reciting the prophecy concerning the “Striking of the Shepherd” from Zc as Jesus made His way with the Apostles from the Last Supper Cenacle room to the Garden of Olives. There may also be a lesson for the Apostles’ future in Jesus’ contrasting the hired hands who run away [cf. Jn 10:12], and the Apostles who will indeed abandon Him [cf. Jn 16:32]. Nonetheless, they will be proven, tried and eventually chastened and purified.

c. Therefore, the task of the Good Shepherd was that of gathering into one flock the scattered children of Israel, and all who would follow after Him. this is not unlike the role of the Servant, Who is called to be the Covenant of the People and the Light of the Nations [cf. Is 42:6]. He has been sent to gather those in “Diaspora”, and to reunite the People of God: indeed He will be the light of the nations, as His Redemption is to reach the “distant isles”, the “ends of the earth” [cf. Is 50:5, ff.].

d. The Good Shepherd image of John offers at least these two aspects:
 - the Pastoral Image: this is the image of the Shepherd guiding, leading the flock, to the rich pasturage; the shepherd as nourishing, healing, providing;

⁴⁹cf. C. Spizq, *OP, Agape’ dans le NT. Analyse des textes*. Paris: Gabalda 1959, Vol. 2, pp. 70,ff:
Agapetos dans les *epitres du NT*.

- the Soteriological Image: this is the Shepherd Who saves His flock by giving His own life: this is the Suffering Servant, Struck by God, pierced through - the Shepherd Who is “struck by God”⁵⁰.

4. ‘It is better that One should die for the People’ [cf. Jn 11:50]:

a. A rather indifferent, unwitting prophecy come to the fore: “it is better” that someone should die rather than witness the destruction of the whole People. The misguided “assembly” of high priests and Pharisees greatly feared for the “People” and the “place”, perhaps meaning the Holy City. The idea of the “place” appears back in the discourse with the Woman of Samaria, where the Woman identifies the “place: of worship” to be Jerusalem [cf. Jn 4:20]. The “place”, too, could mean the Temple.

b. Caiphas seemed to fear public disorder - but John is careful to point out that Caiphas was not speaking in his own name, but particularly in his role as high priest [cf. Jn 11:51].

c. Knowingly, these passages are full of eschatological overtones: the great fears being expressed for the People and the City [cf. Is 43:5; Jr 33:3; Ezk 34:12]. The Prophets saw the “dispersed” streaming back to Zion, the Holy City, or Mount Zion [cf. Is 2:2, ff.; 60:3, ff.]. Zechariah [cf. 14:16, ff.] saw them all coming home at the end of time for a grandiose celebration of the Festival of Tabernacles. Ezechiel had promised the Lord would maintain His sanctuary among them [cf. Ezk 36: 24, ff.].

d. John shows that the death of Jesus is not only for the flock of His own fold, but has come for “all.” Everyone who will accept Him will be welcomed into the one fold by the One Shepherd [cf. Jn 10:16].

e. The effects of Jesus’ redemptive death were far broader than the “nation” which the high priest mentioned in his prophecy. Far more than protecting the sacred precincts of a stone Temple, this Temple would be destroyed, but built right back up again in three days in the Resurrection. As He shared the water and the bread, making believers in Him participate in His Own Personal Mission from the Father - so, likewise, His followers can beam in His light. All who receive the light are empowered to be the children, the heirs of God [cf. Jn 1:12]. Jesus’ Personal Mission is universal - the flock He has in view are each human being, created and redeemed by God. At the

⁵⁰cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, Vol. 2, pp. 295, ff.

Last Super, in His “Yom Kippur” Prayer, Jesus prayed for Himself, as High Priest - for all other priests, the Apostles - and for all who would ever come to believe in Him [cf. Jn 17:21].

5. The Symbolism of the Grain of Wheat [cf. Jn 12:23, ff.]

a. Jn 12 presents the episode of the Greeks who would like to see Jesus, and this leads right into the discourse of the “hour” of the glorification of the Son of Man [v. 23]. Then, follow three verses [vv. 24-26] that present the grain of wheat falling into the ground, which must die. The passage ends with the Prayer of Jesus, very much like the prayer of the Synoptics present as taking place in Gethsemane - and His declaration that He has come into the world for the purpose of glorifying His Father.

b. In this Discourse, Jesus gives an outline of what it means to be a Disciple - it will imply, like the Companions of the Lamb in the Apocalypse [cf. Rv 14:4], following Him wherever He is. The true disciple is asked to follow Him through to the very end.

c. The “grain of wheat”, first of all, is Jesus Himself. This symbol of the Grain of Wheat is not far removed from the insistence on the Unleavened Bread, the celebration of a new spring-time [cf. 1 Co 5:7, ff.]. One almost naturally will make the association that the impending death of Jesus will also bestow the manna in the desert [cf. Ex 16: 4, ff.; Jn 6:32,ff.] - and there will be a new celebration of the Feast of Azymes⁵¹.

6. The Self-Oblation of Jesus [cf. Jn 17:19]

a.] The Priestly Prayer of Jesus is not unlike the High Priest’s prayer of “Yom Kippur.” It is a prayer intimately associated with Christ’s impending Passion and Death from which it can never be separated. The specific “**consecration**” that Jesus is to undergo, is that of **handing over His life**. With the emphasis on the **for them**, there seems to be also Good Shepherd connections [cf. Jn 10:11,15], and Eucharistic [cf. Jn 6:51]. Some have read this passage rather blandly, namely, that in “laying down His life”, it merely meant that Jesus was dedicating Himself to a cause.

⁵¹cf. Nokter Fuglister, *Il valore salvifico della pasqua*. Brescia: Paideia 1976, pp. 123,ff.

b. “Consecration”, though, has special connotations: the Father had “consecrated” Jesus and sent Him into this world cf. Jn 10:36]. The “consecration” of Jesus would include - and surpass - the following:

- the sharing of His doctrine [cf. Jn 17:18];
- the manifestation of His Name [cf. Jn 17:6, 26];
- His offer to protect the Apostles [cf. Jn 17:12].

1.] Jesus’ “consecration” of His life is the external surrender even unto death - a kind of exteriorization of the profound inner unity between the Father and the Son, expressed through loving obedience.

2.] “Consecration” is eminently liturgical - Jesus has come for the expressed purpose of establishing universal cult- as He pointed out in His conversation with the Woman of Samaria: the genuine worship is in spirit and in truth. Jesus consecrates Himself “for others”, for whom He gives His life [cf. Jn 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50, f.; 15:13].

c. The Document to the Hebrews will explain this point: it is no longer the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of heifers. Jesus has offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice. This oblation of His has purified the inner being of His people from all dead actions of slavery - for a free and total service to the living God [cf. Heb 9:11, ff.]. Thus, Jn presents the Mystery of Redemption in liturgical terms of sacrifice out of love.

7. The Calvary Scene [cf. Jn 19]: It is in the Calvary scene that the Gospel of Jn seems to gather together the tremendous symbolism of all that has preceded. In the 19th chapter of the 4th Gospel in the verses surrounding the instant of Jesus; Death, a great amount of symbolism speaks:

a. **Woman, this is your Son! [cf. Jn 19:24, ff.]**: Some have interpreted this as a kind of “private” act - a dying son asking a friend to take care of his mother. As is well known, however, there are deeper levels in Jn, and often profound lessons that are reached from a prayerful reading of the text. When Jesus multiplies the bread He is presenting Himself also as the Bread from Heaven. And there is more to life than bread - every word that comes from the mouth of the Father. When Jesus gives sight to the blind, He comes across as the true Light of the World and the Nations. He has come to strengthen wavering faith.

1.] At this solemn moment, there is the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. Many believe that Gn 3:15 is again in the background here, as it is perhaps in Jn 2: the "Woman" and her off - spring are engaged in a terrible combat for the redemption of the world. If the first Eve was to be known as "the mother of the living" [cf. Gn 3:20], with all the more reason is this true of Mary.

2.] The words of Jesus have both affective and effective meaning: in expressing affection, Jesus also states what has taken place. A birth of a new people has come about typified by John. The "Daughter of Sion" has carried her child to term: as a woman with child suffers greatly [cf. Is 26:17]. Or, Sion, only just in labor, brings forth sons [cf. Is 66:8, ff.]. A woman in child-birth does suffer because her time has come - but her joy will be great, knowing that new life is born into this world [cf. Jn 16:21].

3.] Jesus has indicated in the person of Mary that which He will bring about in the Church: the birth of the New People of God. Mary was present at the great moments of the Mystery of Redemption:

- she belonged to the OT period of expectancy, as a realization of the Daughter of Sion;
- and she was present in a unique manner at Jesus' birth [cf. Lk 1-2];
- she was present as He initiated His public life [Jn 2];
- she is present as Jesus "ex-spires" [cf. Jn 19:27];
- she is present again as the Church comes to birth [cf. Ac 1:4], rally born out of the side of Christ.

4.] Hers is a usually "retiring" presence, yet one that is dynamic, forceful, in its expression and activity for those most in need. In extraordinary faith, hope and love, she follows the merciful plan of the Heavenly Father, carried out in the life of Jesus Christ. Her prayer interprets the dreams and hopes of the anonymous *Anawim*.

b. 'Everything had been completed ... to fulfill the Scriptures perfectly ... It is accomplished...[cf. Jn 19:28-30]

1.] There is in this brief passage a certain insistence on "completion", or "fulfillment" - either of the Scriptures, or of the work assigned to Him by the Father. The Church is coming to birth by the consigning to Mary as her son, John -and John will look upon Mary as his "Mother". With this supreme gesture, "everything" is now completed in Jesus' earthly mission. His earthly sojourn is now coming to an end, and Jesus has carried out His tasks "to perfection."

2.] Like the “New Servant”, Jesus’ task was to gather into one the scattered children of God [cf. J 11:52]. “All” is now fulfilled - the tunic will not be divided [cf. Jn 21:11]. To pen the “Gospel of Glory” John had written that Jesus had always loved “His” in this world, but the perfection of His love would be shown by His loving them right through to the end [cf. Jn 13:1, ff.].

c. **“I thirst..” [cf. Jn 19:38]: Physical, Mystical, “Trinitarian”:**

1.] Scholars have worked out something of a balance:

“...Everything had been accomplished...I <u>thirst</u>	It is accomplished: He gave up
His [v. 28]	<u>Spirit</u> [v.30].

This would bring together the “thirst” of Jesus and His “ex-spiration”, the giving up of His Spirit.

2.] Once again, the by-now pattern is familiar: with the thirst of Jesus, there is general misunderstanding. “Vinegar” is repeated three separate times [cf. vv. 29, 30]. The Synoptics present this action as one of derision [cf. Lk 23:36]. In Jn’s rendition, the symbolism presented might well be understood in the light of his treatment of “thirst and water” thus far in his gospel.

3.] Jesus’ thirst is closely associated with the “fulfillment” theme - He had stated already that His food was the Father’s Will. The “completion” of Jesus’ work, and His “thirst” are tied in with the sending out of the Holy Spirit. Earlier Jesus had promised the disciples that He would ask the Father to send “another” Paraclete, when His own Personal Mission was over [cf. Jn 14:16]. He also described somewhat the Mission of the Spirit, to be Jesus’ Witness [cf. Jn 15:26]. The Spirit of the truth will observe a mysterious “deference”, in that, like Christ. He will not speak as from Himself. He will only communicate what He has “learned”. This is the mystery of the Trinity - a kind of mutual deference, loving obedience, and eternal equality [cf. Jn 16:13, ff.].

4.] Jesus “hungered” to do the Will of the Father - and “thirsted” to send the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ death is read on two levels: in giving up His own Spirit, His Spirit continues His Personal Mission through the Apostles. Jesus’ physical thirst is a revelation of His spiritual thirst of sharing His message - and His “existential thirst” of sending out the Holy Spirit.

5.] The thirst of Jesus Christ is His consuming yearning for the Father's glory. His living obedience to carry out the Father's merciful plan of redemption can indeed be translated in biblical terms as a "yearning" to see the Father's glory.

d. **"Bowing His head, He gave up His spirit..." [cf. Jn 19:3]:** this action of "ex-spiration" on the part of Jesus, in total deference to the Father's Will, opens up the way for the Holy Spirit. This is an entirely new era, a New Covenant. The last breath of Jesus is the communication of the Holy Spirit of God. This is already partial fulfillment of the "Pierced One" - the Lord had promised to pour out a spirit of kindness and prayer over Jerusalem [cf. Zc 12:10].

e. **A Soldier pierced His Side with a lance ... immediately there came out blood and water...[cf. Jn 19:34].**

1.] Perhaps the emphasis is on the "blood" here in this passage - as later [cf. 1 Jn 5:6 , ff.] the order is reversed. Here it is to show that the death of Jesus indeed was sacrificial. In order for the Spirit to come, symbolized by Jn in the "Living Waters", it was necessary for Jesus to offer His sacrificial death to the Heavenly Father. Jesus' death "opens the doors" for the Holy Spirit ⁵².

2.] The piercing of the side of Christ, mentioned only in Jn, is shrouded both in the mystery of the divine love and is the culmination of a very careful Johannine preparation in the use of his symbols. Whoever "looks" on this scene with the eyes of contemplative faith will be rewarded by the "coming" of Jesus, "thirsting" for Him.

3.] In this Gospel of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" [cf. Jn 19:26] - or, at least, the author presents himself as an eye-witness to this flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus. John is said twice to have been the one who reclined on the breast of Jesus [cf. Jn 13:25; 21:20]. There is in this Gospel a profound sharing of one's own faith. He is presenting :what he has seen with his own eyes ... what he watched ... what he touched with his own hands... [cf. 1 Jn 1:1, ff.]. He is communicating this faith of his so that all indeed might believe, and come to life.

4.] The basic symbolic sense had already been given by John when he recorded Christ in His Discourse for the Festival of Tabernacles [cf. Jn 7:38]. Tabernacles, as is well known, which provided the background for this Johannine

⁵²cf. Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, pp. 42-47.

prophecy, was a festival that prayed for rain. The ritual commemorated the miracle of water in the Exodus [cf. Ex 17:1, ff.; 1 Co 10:4]. The readings traced the great history of the wonders of the Lord bringing life through the copious living waters through the long generations of OT history. There were recalled the streams of water from underneath the Temple that restored the desert into a Garden of Eden [cf. Ezk 47:1, ff.]. There was also recalled the fountain of purifying water promised in the last times by Zc [cf. 13:1; 14:8].

5.] It had been announced long before by the prophets - and then promised by Jesus just shortly before - that the era of the Holy Spirit would pour out over the followers of Christ. It is indeed following upon the sacrificial oblation of Jesus that the redemption of the world depends. This is all the working out of the mystery of divine mercy over human misery:

- The Blood of the Lamb is here given up for sinners [cf. Jn 1:29, 36].
- Jesus is indeed the Bread of Life for the world [cf. Jn 6].
- He is the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His flock [cf. Jn 10:15].
- Jesus died for the dispersed children of God [cf. Jn 11:52] - like an oasis in the midst of the desert, the streams of salvation flowing abundantly from the pierced side of Christ becoming the meeting point for the caravans of all time.

f. 'They will look on the One they have pierced' [cf. Jn 19:37]

1.] To "look on" Jesus means to "believe" - this is the gaze of contemplative faith. To "thirst" for Jesus means to "come" to Him, and to "believe" in Him. While the earlier passages in Jn stressing "thirst", the reference was to that of the believers - while perhaps that of Jesus was at least implicit. He also "thirsted" to communicate the good news of merciful redemption. On Calvary, the thirst of Jesus is a redemptive mystery - but the implicit "hope" is that the believers will come to this mystery through the centuries and seek to fathom it. His "thirst" just prior to His death in the context of "completion" indicates that His task has been accomplished. His Personal Mission will be continued by the Holy Spirit.

2.] The text of Zc [12:10; 13:1] here offers a culmination and response to this mystery of mercy. Whatever the background of Zc's thought, some atrocious crime has been committed against someone. This unfair death is the fault of the people in some way. There is deep regret and mourning - but through divine mercy, God nonetheless pours out a spirit of pardon. The hearts of those who are culpable are changed - there is a conversion deep within Israel. In recognizing their sin, Israel mourns over its infidelity.

3.] In accord with the texts of Zc, Jn brings together the “Pierced One” and the eschatological font of the Living Waters. Jn is inviting believers to open their eyes of faith to reflect on this mystery: through conversion of heart, one will contemplate the “Pierced One”, be purified by the Streams of Salvation, and come to the recognition of the Son of God. Much like the People of Samaria who come to believe that Jesus is the Savior of the World - those who contemplate this scene of the dead Jesus will come to penetrate ever more deeply the mystery of God’s Mercy.

4.] Jn brings back for reflection the ancient mystery of Exodus: to be healed in the desert, it was enough to look upon the bronze serpent [cf. Nb 21⁴⁻⁹]. The Son of Man was destined to be “lifted up” [cf. Jn 3:14]. In looking up with the heart of faith, one comes to “see” just Who the Son of Man is, and enters into the Mystery of Redemption. It is here from the Pierced One that believers, following the Apostles, will come to draw waters joyfully from the Streams of Salvation [cf. Is 12:3].

5.] The Apocalypse presents this “Pierced One” as coming at the end of time, “on the clouds”, much like the Son of Man in glory [cf. Rv 1:7]. Even those who have pierced Him, will see Him - at the end of time, the eyes of all will be “opened.”

6.] As “thirst” was seen on several levels, so also is this “seeing” the Pierced One. There is the sight that those who were on Calvary were privileged to have in the company of Mary, who “stood by the Cross.” This physical view was already predicted perhaps in some way by the promise of a special “Pierced One”. And then through the centuries, the mystical vision of faith will lead countless “Companions of the Lamb” to follow Him wherever He goes. And in the final vision, the Immolated Lamb will be seen in glory forever - with the marks of the Stigmata retained in the Resurrected Body.

7.] Through the centuries, the “vision of faith” of believers will be translated into mourning. In a sense, the Church may be perpetuated by this scene on Calvary in her penance: “Blessed are they who mourn...” The “assembly of the faithful” are those who have accepted the great Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.

8.] When Jesus is “raised up” [Cross/ Resurrection] [cf. Jn 3:14, ff.; 6:44; 12:32], all are “drawn” toward Him: by the communication of His Divine Revelation - and by the deep inner stirrings of the heart, the “preeminent grace” of the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Pierced One invites those who will contemplate the mystery.

9.] In the 4th Gospel, there is a kind of Trinitarian dimension to the “teaching of God” predicted in the prophecy of the New Covenant. Jr had predicted that all would come to “know” the Lord, through the fact that He never calls sin to mind anymore [cf. Jr 31:31-34]. This would be the knowledge, the experience of God’s mercy. Jesus states that to “learn” from the Father’s teaching really means to come to Him [cf. Jn 6:45]. The whole preaching of Jesus is simply what the Father has taught Him [cf. Jn 8:28]. And the Holy Spirit will remind the faithful of all that Jesus has taught [cf. Jn 14:25, ff.].

10.] The Pierced One “opens a door” to the Mystery of Redemption. To reach glorification, Jesus had to go the way of the Cross [cf. Jn 12:23; 17:1, 5] and endure the Stigmata - it is necessary to have faith in this Cross in order to be redeemed. The “Cross” has always been central to Christianity. The power of the “Light” - the ability to be the children of God, all come to the believer in the outpouring of the redemption from the Cross. The entire 4th Gospel is oriented from the beginning toward the Cross. Throughout Jn’s writings, there is the repeated fulfillment and application of many OT symbols to show the mystery of redemption as having been achieved in the manner of the OT cultic oblations and holocausts. There is unanimity in the early Church presenting the mission of Jesus as One of redemptive mercy. The Cross, the offering of His body and blood, and the sending of the Holy Spirit - are all presented through a most skillful tapestry of OT texts and realities ⁵³

g. Three Witnesses: The Spirit, the Water and the Blood [cf. 1 Jn 5:6-8]:

1.] Here, the order of the “blood and water”, noted on Calvary, is reversed. Some scholars note that there may be a theological intuition here, even if the author of this document is not the same as that of the 4th Gospel.

2.] The gospel speaks of the “children” of God, as these who truly believe in Jesus Christ. The basic faith is that Jesus has been begotten by God. to have complete faith in Jesus, the author states that it is necessary to believe that Jesus is the Christ not only at the moment of Baptism [in the water], but also on Calvary, in the shedding of His blood. If this were not the case, the entire mystery of redemption would fall.

3.] The author of this Epistle has responded repeatedly that Jesus is not divisible [cf. 1 Jn 1:3; 2:1; 3:23 4:2; 5:5, 20]. There was no more temporary union

⁵³cf. F. M. Braun, OP, Vol. 3/1, pp. 178-182, passim. cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John, XIII-XXI*. Anchor Bible, Vol. 29 A. Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1970, pp. 944-956.

at the moment of Baptism. Jesus is one, also in dying for the redemption of the world. The “water” and the “blood” here also seem to indicate a kind of chronology of Jesus’ public life: His Baptism in the Jordan and the giving of His Blood on Calvary. This “water” and “blood” offer “witness”. The testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Baptism of Jesus and the shedding of His blood is testimony concerning His Person: Jesus Christ indeed is the Son of God. The Holy Spirit has come to offer witness concerning Jesus. Visible and invisible realities here come together in their united witness, and all three agree here ⁵⁴.

4.] There are various interpretations of this passage ⁵⁵. Prescinding from the many differences of opinion, it might be said that the Baptism of the Christian has a profound association with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Lamb has taken away the sins of the world. The Mystery of Redemption is communicated through Baptism. The Immolated Lamb is given the keys to open the sealed Book.

5.] The Exodus experience is often seen as a “Baptism” of the Israelites - the passing through the Sea of Reeds and the partaking of the streams of fresh water from the rock. Many have seen the water and the blood as the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and the birth of the Church from the side of Jesus Christ.

6.] Strict exegesis may not attribute all this symbolism to the immediate intention of the author. There is, however, almost a natural affiliation between water and Baptism, and the Blood and the Eucharist, with the communication of the Eucharist realized in the Sacraments. The “sacramental interpretation” of these verses would find strong support also within John.

7.] The appeal of the reading is to remain faithful to the doctrine already received concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. Many see a kind of “logical” and almost “chronological” order in presenting “the Spirit, the water and the Blood”: the Spirit moves one “preveniently” with His grace; the catechumens ask for and receive Baptism, prior to being admitted to the Eucharistic table. Then, all three in the baptized person, incorporated into Christ Jesus by the Eucharist, then become committed to the Personal Mission of Jesus Christ.

⁵⁴cf. F.M. Braun, OP, Vol. 3/1, pp. 169, ff.

⁵⁵cf. R. Brown, *The Epistles of John*. The Anchor Bible Vol. 30. Gaaden City NY: Doubleday and Company, and Inc. 1982, pp. 594-599, and 575-578, 775-787.

8.[Baptism and Eucharist communicate the redemptive value of the death of Jesus. A number of relationships are begun with the Baptism and Incorporation into the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. To each is communicated a share in the faith, which asks for an increase and a response. Through the Spirit, one is born anew, and an increasing participation is offered in accord with one's openness, docility.

9.] The reception of Baptism in the Spirit, and Incorporation into Christ confer a very special share in the Paschal Mystery. This offers purification from sin, birth from on high, and the life of faith ⁵⁶.

8. The Festival of Tabernacles remembered in the Apocalypse

a. In the times of Jesus, the Apocalyptic literature had a most messianic interpretation. The NT book by that name recalls the Messianic Fountain, which Ezechiel said would make a New Eden [cf. Rv 22:1, ff.]. There is the promise of the bestowal of life-giving waters [cf. Rv 21: 6, ff.; 22:17]. In the New Jerusalem, the wondrous effects of Tabernacles will be enjoyed. In place of the "greater and lesser lights", God and the Lamb will be the true Light [cf. Rv 21:23].

b. At the end of Sacred Scripture, grace has conquered: the terrible ordeal is over. Visions of the first Garden of Eden re-appear. The trees of paradise, abundant with fruit each month of the year - the river that brings life is flowing, coursing through the New Jerusalem. This is the return to the life-giving waters of Paradise which flow to the four corners of the globe.

c. The first Creation story is history, but also **prophecy** - the Garden of Eden is a "memory" of the "Good Old Days", but also a **Hope** for future times ⁵⁷. God's People indeed will draw waters joyfully from the abundant Streams of Salvation! [cf. Is 12:3].

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⁵⁶cf. F. M.Braun, OP, Vol. 3/2, pp. 146-150.

⁵⁷cf. J. Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse*. Tournai: Desclee 1965, pp.228-231; cf. also Matthias Rissi, *The Future of the World*. Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series 23. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972, pp. 80-83.

B. THE STIGMATA OF THE RESURRECTION

Presentation

[1] The “Paschal Faith” [Hope and Love] offered by the 20th Chapter of St. John’s Gospel exhibits a most sublime expression. Jn 20 reflects upon the “Glorious Stigmata”, the five wounds of Jesus Christ, mysterious retained in His resurrected Body.

[2] There is in Jn a number of Wisdom themes - and one of these is the “**seek and find**” principle.

[a] The first words in Jn’s Gospel uttered by Jesus are: “What do you want?” [cf. Jn 1:38].

[b] In this Jn 20, there are several instances where those close to Jesus “do not know” Him.

[c] The story of this chapter is that the disciples only gradually came to Paschal Faith - and became bold Apostolic Missionaries of this Paschal Faith, to the far ends of the world.

[3] Repeatedly, Jesus in a most mysterious fashion, had said that He would one day “leave” the disciples. He said once that they would look for Him, and be unable to find Him because He was going back to the Father [cf. Jn 7:33,ff.]. He told His disciples that where He was going they could not come [cf. Jn 8:21]. But, yet they would indeed look for Him [cf. Jn13:33].

[4] One of the marks of the disciple is to look for the Lord - to their credit, even though they offended Him in life, they looked with expectant faith, hope and love, when a hint came that He might have risen.

[5] One of the great difficulties in Jn 20 is that it contains so much: there are so many incidents, and they do not all run together smoothly as would a story. Yet, with all the complexity that may be found in this key chapter of the 4th Gospel, there are easily discernible themes that construct a doctrinal unity.

[a] While Jn 20 may not be “historical chronology” as this would be understood today - there seems to be in this Chapter the emphasis on a **Theology of Conversion**, that the encounter with the resurrected Christ - still retaining the marks of His Immolation after His coming to the new and resurrected life - can lead to a more intense Paschal Faith, Hope and Love - as well as to Joy and Peace: the specific

prayer of the Risen Lord for His Apostolic Missionaries. The Resurrection is a distinct invitation to “think of those things that are above.”

[b] Paschal Faith, Hope and Love are seen here contending with various real handicaps: Good Friday night, and the hours following, were periods of abject silence, doubt, deluded hopes and fear. The disciples closed themselves in - the very opposite reaction to the challenge of the Apostolic Mission. Jesus simply was not recognized - despite all the time He had spent with them, describing this miracle of the resurrection.

[6] The Reflections here will be divided as follows:

- Four Encounters: Personal Models of the Church: the Beloved Disciple; Mary Magdalen; the Apostles; Thomas.
- Three Gifts: the Holy Spirit; the Forgiveness of Sin; the Apostolic Mission.

1. **Four Encounters with the Risen Lord: “Personal Models of the Church”**: The final principle that will be stated at the end of these four episodes seems to be the verse, that “Johannine Beatitude”, to which they all tend: “**blessed are those who have come to faith, even though they have not seen!**” [cf. Jn 20:9]. Much thought will be given to the Johannine principle that “seeing - even without much explanation - is believing”. However, this writing is to an early community, of which the large majority had not seen. Hence, John is stressing acceptance of the ecclesial testimony of those who had seen the Risen Lord. In the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the drama would be re-presented: the hearts of those who listen as the Scriptures unfold, and those who are participants through the long generations of the Church, will indeed come to “know” Jesus, and receive the Risen Lord in their hearts. The great emphasis of this Chapter is Paschal faith, Hope and Love ⁵⁸.

a. **The Beloved Disciple [cf. Jn 20:8]**

1.] While “love” makes every weight light, it also in the case of the “Beloved Disciple” made the run to the tomb seem easy - so, he arrived first, and yet awaited Peter’s arrival out of deference. Love inspires a truly ardent “**quest for the Lord**” ⁵⁹.

⁵⁸For waht follows, cf. also D. Mollat, SJ, “La foi pascale selon le chapitre 20 del Evangile de Jean. Essai de theologie biblique”, in: *Rrsurrexit. Actes du Symposium international sur la Resurrection de Jesus. [Rome 1970]*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1974, pp. 316-331, passim.

⁵⁹cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John, XIII-XXII*. Anchor Bible 29/A, pp. 1004-1008.

2.] There is emphasis on the fact that they had not understood the words of Jesus during His sojourn on earth [cf. v. 9]. It seems evident that this event found them totally unable to comprehend the Mystery that was unfolding before them. The scope of this incident seems to associate the depths of love with coming to deeper faith. While it is true that “nothing is loved unless it is known” - it is likewise true that “nothing can be known in depth until it is loved.” There is in this verse the description of the struggle to come to authentic Paschal Faith, Hope and Love. We find a number of “personalized” Models of the Church in these passages.

3.] Throughout these various manifestations of the mystery of divine mercy, frequently one encounters a lack of comprehension, radical ignorance, the spiritual incapacity to fathom the awesome distance the human mind and heart must travel to accept the Person of Jesus Christ.

a.] At Cana, they did not know where the wine, transformed from the water, had come from [cf. Jn 2:9].

b.] The Woman of Samaria had no idea of the real gift of the “Living water” that Jesus was offering to her [cf. Jn 4:10]. When Jesus was explaining to His disciples that His “food” was the Father’s Will, He explained that it was a food that they did not know [cf. Jn 4:32].

4.] Paschal Faith, Hope and Love are so “new”, unexpected - despite all the preparation the followers of Jesus Christ had been given for this. In so many ways, this “New Creation” was so totally “new” that the symbols and images still remained far from their minds and hearts in what was happening:

- the First Creation was an exercise of divine power: separating the turbulent, chaotic waters; drawing water from underneath the arid desert floor - breathing a divine life into the dust of the earth;

- the second Creation was Redemption: the unruly abyss of the Sea of Reeds was separated: water was drawn from the rock in the desert - and the Spirit of God guided His People through the fire in the night, and the cloud by day;

- the Third Creation is the Resurrection: the Spirit of the Most High ‘breathes’ over the Field of the Dry Bones and new life has come.

5.] The “Beloved Disciple” is the model of disciples of all times. Having been given Christ’s own Mother on Calvary, now at the empty tomb, he simply “saw and believed.” There is clear contrast with Thomas - who did not see, and did not believe. These stories are presented also as lessons of faith.

6.] In the “Gospel of Signs”, many “saw” and refused belief. Those listening to Jesus in Jn 6, saw Him, and held back their faith [cf. Jn 6:30, ff.]. The conclusion to the “Gospel of Signs” opens with the line that even though many had been present, and had seen His signs, they would not believe in Him [cf. Jn 12:37]. Small wonder, then, that the “Gospel of Glory” - which paradoxically opens with the radical humility of Jesus washing His disciples’ feet - that the sign of Jonah in the whale, is still more difficult to grasp.

7.] The appeal of this passage is for the mature, tranquil and total acceptance of the Risen Lord. Such faith also feeds, while flows from, ardent hope and love. The “empty tomb” is just that - the stone that was rolled back could offer a broad number of explanations. But, what moved John, after seeing to believe, could only have come from being “born from on high.”

8.] True Paschal Faith, Hope and Love are only possible to authentically “beloved” disciples. The “beloved” disciple is also the “faithful servant” - loving service leads to faith, and persevering discipleship will lead one to authentic faith. Love is said to be “blind” - but, in this case, it is “love” that opens the spiritual capacity to believe and to hope. There is mutual dynamism active in faith, hope and charity, an inter-connection among the theological virtues. This is evident perhaps in this incident -- where the Beloved Disciple is able to offer sublime faith, the surrender of intellect and will, the abandonment of one’s whole life, to the words and to the person of the Son of God ⁶⁰.

b. Mary Magdalen [cf. Jn 20:11-18]

1.] This extraordinary “convert” who had “resurrected” in her own life, almost giving her a kind of “connaturality” with which to come gradually to faith in the Risen Lord, become His first apostle and missionary in this Mystery. She, too, is an ideal “Model of the Church”, coming from a sinful way of life to the true life of her Risen Lord and redeemer. She is the fulfillment of the old Deuteronomic ideal, of loving with all one’s heart, soul and strength [cf. Dt 6:4, ff.].

2.] In her “encounter” with the Risen Christ, she had “lost” Him for a while. In her own not yet confirmed faith, Jesus asks her why she is weeping. In the fulfillment of the symbolism for the Feast of Tabernacles, it was meant to be a Festival of total Joy. And Christ asks her why she weeps, and for Whom does she seek.

⁶⁰cf. DV 5, for a beautiful description of faith.

Early in Jn's Gospel a similar question forms the first recorded words of Jesus Christ: **What do you want????**" [cf. Jn 1:35, ff.].

3.] Before "finding" Jesus, Mary is invited to formulate her deepest conviction concerning Him. He once asked the disciples just Who it was that they thought He is.

- this is the Church's first actual encounter with the Risen Christ;
- her response to Jesus' question is that someone has taken her "Lord" away;
- her inability to recognize Jesus, Whom she dearly loved and surely would have recognized had He simply returned to this physical way of life, would make it difficult to think of the Mystery of the Resurrection merely as "re-vitalization", or "re-animation": these would be the return to the same mode of life that Jesus had lived prior to His Passion and Death.

4.] It is Jesus Who bridges the gap for her from lack of recognition to Paschal Faith, Hope and Love - from having "lost" her Lord, to "finding" Him again. Like an ancient prophecy: telling Israel not to be afraid, for she is redeemed. The "beloved" is called by name, is precious in the divine "eyes", for He loves her [cf. Is 43: 1, ff.]. From now on, her intimate union will be her Redeemer, her Creator is her Husband. This is the first time that Jesus addresses her in His Resurrection. To communicate one's name is something of a sharing with one's life. Jesus shares His Resurrection now with one who had loved Him with great ardor. If Mary Magdalen is indeed the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus at the table [cf. Lk 7:36-50] ⁶¹, her sins are forgiven for she has loved much.

5.] Yet, even in the exaltation of Jesus, Paschal Faith, Hope and Love need further **kenosis** : do not cling! In the mystery of the Jesus Who had surrendered all external manifestation of the divine glory, He poured out His entire human existence through His Sacred Stigmata. Jesus did not "cling" to His equality with God [cf. Ph 2:5-11]. While this offers a most sublime model for the "fraternal humility" of the Philippians, this is the image of God giving of Self in this extraordinary Mystery of Mercy, which culminates in these events. The faith of Mary Magdalen still sought somewhat personal consolation - a kind of "holding on" to Jesus just for herself, whereas the resurrection is the patrimony of the ecclesial assembly. The community, humanity. As did the sinful woman at the Supper, so the women who encounter the Risen Jesus in the Gospel of Mt [cf. 28:9, ff.], the message is the same. There is a type of "prophetic commission": go and tell the others!

⁶¹cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, *The Gospel of St. Luke. NT Reading Guide*. Collegeville: MI 1964, pp. 71, ff.

6.] The reception of Mercy makes a Missionary of the favored one. Forgive as one has been forgiven - is one of the constant principles of the message of Christ. Mary Magdalen is established as the Prophetess of the Resurrection, the first to whom the message is personally communicated by the Risen Christ. She remains throughout this encounter "a Model of the Church". Her message falls onto hard times, however, and is not immediately accepted even by the inner circle of Apostles. In this, she remains close to her Redeemer: His sayings were often "hard", or difficult to accept. the word must be communicated in the Mission of Mercy.

7.] As the pardoned sinner had "found" her Redeemer, by being named by Him, now she is given the commission to go, to find, and to communicate this message to the Church. She had been searching all of her life - the indefatigable quest for the Lord led her to being discovered by Him.

8.] Mary thought that the Resurrected Jesus was the "gardener" - for so much of the Mystery of Mercy centered around the "Garden." In the beginning of time, God made the Garden grow - later, He planted the Israelites as His choicest vineyard - the Incarnate Son of God offered His oblation of bloody sweat in Gethsemane, even before it was roughly taken from Him in the cruel Stigmata of Good Friday. the "Garden" received the direct creative power of God - and here, the sanctuary of God, is shown to be perhaps a Garden of Delight, where God simply "is." The early light of a new day, the Day of the Lord, has come - the first streaks of the new dawn are beginning. Once more, all is "in the beginning", creation begins anew.

9.] Just as the First Creation was in response to the Lord's Word, the Resurrection, too, asks for docility, acceptance of the Lord's will. This New Life cannot be held back by anything of this earth. The hope that is brought by the new times cannot be fulfilled totally in this life. There is asked of each believer a "passing over" from this world to the Father [cf. Jn 13:1], the opening lines of the Gospel of Glory.

10.] The New Era has come into being by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is required that one pass from the contemplation of the grievous suffering inflicted on Good Friday to the glory of the "Wounded Healer". Passover Faith, Hope and Love must endure the harshness of the Wounds of Good Friday - Jesus did not "cling" either to equality with His Father, nor to this earthly life. He asks of all Apostolic Missionaries a surrender.

11.] Mary's great announcement is that she has seen the Lord. She had already "seen" Christ on earth, and had accepted His message in its entirety. Like the Woman of Samaria and her five husbands - Mary had been redeemed from a terrible "clinging-hold." Her message, as her life, asks for an acceptance in faith. Like the Beloved Disciple, Mary loved much - although her quest for the Lord had been long, torturous, and sometimes wandering, one she "found" Him, she never wanted to let Him go.

12.] Jesus had easily recognized Mary who had loved much - and Mary came to see it was Jesus, as He had forgiven much. Paschal Faith, Hope and Love will demand the difficult Mission of the resurrection to the far ends of the world. For Mary, Jesus is a living and present Person. Having come from a life of sin, where Jesus was distant, and she was "dead"; she now shares in the eternal, vibrant glory of the Risen Christ, Whom she loved much in her life ⁶².

c. **The Disciples closed in the Cenacle Room [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.]**

1.] Paschal faith, hope and love here "open the door to the Redeemer". From being closed in, in one room, the Apostles will receive the breath of the Lord, and become bold Missionaries of His Mercy. The contrast is that from sentiments of fear and sadness - and maybe even more fear for themselves than sadness for Jesus - the Apostles are "converted" by their encounter with the Risen Lord to His special "Peace and Joy."

2.] "Peace" [***Shalom***] means much more than a routine OT greeting; it was also the description of **Covenants**. When the Lord God declared His own Peace after the storm [cf. Gn 9], He set His rainbow high in the clouds, out of reach, far from the lightning bolt arrows, as His Sign of Peace. Peace is an important aspect of the prophetic message - the deliverance from exile, see by II-Is as a New Creation and a New Exodus. This is the New Covenant which the Risen Lord establishes. There will come the "Prince of Peace" in an idealized Kingdom, in the times of the Messianic King. From this Kingdom, all strife will have been removed ⁶³.

3.] From the beginning, "joy" is promised in the midst of God's People, long before its identity is known. It is the joy of Redemption that is being

⁶²cf. R. Brown, *ib.*, Vol 29/A, pp. 1002-1004, 1008-1017.

⁶³cf. C.F. Evans, "Peace", in: *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*. edited by Alan Richardson. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1950, ppp. 1665' cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, Easter 1963.

promised. Sometimes bucolic in its expression, sometimes nuptial - it is the fulfillment of the most sublime hopes. It is a sign through the ages - in the Psalms, hoped for in the writings of the Prophets, contemplated by the Wisdom writers. With the Resurrection of Jesus, it now stands before the Apostles in their closed room ⁶⁴.

4.] In this “Christo-phany”. Jesus manifests the marks of His immolation still visible in His Risen Body. The “apocalypse” is attributed to John, or the Johannine school - and here, there is an unveiling of His wounds. The manifestation of the Stigmata in Lk [of the hands and feet] removes doubt - in Jn, the Glorious Stigmata, indicating the presence of the Risen Lord, communicate Peace and Joy. This is the same Christ: the One Who came in the water and in the Blood - and with the Spirit, all making one Witness [cf. 1 Jn 5:6-8]. In confirming their faith in His Person, He made known to them that the “Crucified” is also the “Resurrected”, the “Servant” is also the “Lord.”.

5.] When the Magi visited the newly born Infant [cf. Mt 2:1, ff.] this “Epiphany” was of the Self-emptying of the Eternal Son of God. From His omnipotent “condition”, He is born in weakness: the eternal Word of God is born an “in-fant”, unable to speak. The **kenosis** of the Nativity is at the same time a revelation of the Trinity: whoever sees Me, sees the Father - Jesus is the ICON of the invisible God - Jesus is the perfect emanation of the divine nature [cf. Col 1:15; Heb 1:1, ff.; Jn 14:9]. The “marvelous condescension” of God to set up His dwelling came to this extreme manifestation of infinite power in the most total human dependence.

6.] Good Friday is the other extreme dimension of the **kenosis** of Jesus Christ, at the far end of the earthly sojourn of Jesus Christ. By emptying Himself of the vital principle of His Precious Blood, Jesus offers His human existence in propitiation.

7.] The Angels sang of the Glory of God on the occasion of the Nativity of Jesus in Bethlehem - here, in the manifestation of the Glorious Stigmata in the Risen Body, Jesus reveals the Divine Glory. Here, He is given a Name above all Names: Jesus Christ is “Lord”, to the Glory of the Father, in the Holy Spirit.

8.] The light and the openness of the Resurrection come into this room, closed off, and permeated with fear. The presence of the wounded Lord, now in His glorious state, dissipates the gloom, and opens up the closed hearts of the

⁶⁴cf. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudete in Domino* Pentecost 1975.

disciples. They “saw” and immediately are filled with joy. Peace comes to them, and their faith is strengthened.

9.] These disciples will also bring the message of the Risen Lord to Thomas. who at this moment is not present. They will simply say that they have “seen” the Lord - but, their entire attitude of confirmed faith, returned joy, will show that their seeing was not simply that of passive spectatorship. These men, who first trembled in fear, now become courageous Apostolic Missionaries to the far ends of the earth. The closed doors of the Cenacle Room - and their apostolic hearts - indeed have been opened up to the Risen Christ!

d. Thomas [cf. Jn 20:24-29]:

1.] In the first Encounter noted here, John only “saw” the empty tomb, and His Paschal Faith, Hope and Love for the Redeemer filled in the void. He did not “see” Jesus, but believed He had risen. In this sense, the Johannine Beatitude applied to him: blessed is he who does not see, yet believes!

2.] Mary Magdalen “saw”, but did not comprehend - gradually, and gently, she is brought to the faith in the resurrection. All her life, she “sought” fulfillment - oftentimes mistakenly, until her life had been breached by that of Jesus. In His Mercy, Jesus calls her name - and then directs her not to “cling.”

3.] The disciples, at once bold and glad to be close to Jesus - on Tabor, and when the miracles drew the crowds - are now closed in on their fear and grief. the Redeemer opens the doors to them, and their fear becomes courage, their sadness is transformed into joy. The doubts all dissipate, and the faith of the Apostles will have them go to the far corners of the globe, preaching the Good News of Peace.

4.] Thomas, however, for some unexplained reason, was missing - and he indeed becomes a Model of the Church in his ultimate Confession of Jesus, and in what the Lord says to him. It is not that Thomas had “seen” the Lord, and rejected the evidence. Thomas was already part of the New People of God, who would be called to faith through the centuries on the strength of the Apostolic testimony. Like the Apostles had not believed Mary Magdalen - now, Thomas has difficulty in accepting even their joined witness. It is almost as though he wanted the same consideration from the Lord. He, like so many others in history, wished to be favored with his own sight of the Risen Lord, a personal message from Him. He had known that the Apostles, like himself, had been slow to believe and readily fled the

Lord as he did the night of the tragedy. Now it is difficult for him to accept the authority of those chosen by the Lord to govern His Church.

5.] Finally, Thomas is granted his own “personal encounter” with the Risen Lord. It almost seems as though Thomas had put conditions on his faith. For him, “seeing” and only seeing personally, was believing. As the majority of those who would come to the faith will not have the privilege of vision, or of a personal message, Thomas’ Confession becomes a kind of “model” for all who would “follow after” to imitate/follow/put on the mind of Jesus Christ through the ages.

6.] Thomas is the “Twin”, slow to believe - and once more, the Lord manifests His “marvelous condescension”, and takes the step towards Thomas. He is invited to carry out the conditions that he personally had put down. He is invited to see that the Stigmata are real; he is invited to test the hands and the side of the Risen Lord. With John, there is always this insistence of the wound in the side of Christ, also retained in His Glorious Body.

7.] In the end, Thomas’ enthusiastic response is the correct one: Jesus is indeed the Lord and God of all believers of all time. In infinite mercy and patience, the Lord comes:

- to the slow of heart;
- to the quick of mind, such as Paul;
- to those who really do love, like John, but who may have fled at the time of weakness anyway;
- to the impetuous, like Peter - who then fell away all too easily.

The Risen Lord comes to all such as these, and they are one and all, “Models of the Church.”

8.] Jesus then defines the true disciple, the faithful servant, the ideal **Apostolic Missionary**: blessed are they all who will come to the faith, and will not have had this privilege of personal vision of the Glorious Stigmata of Jesus Christ resplendent in His resurrection.

9.] The faith of the Church in this sense is indeed “apostolic” - it depends on the testimony of those who have seen. Anyone who has studied their written “testimony” in the inspired record of their account of these days will soon realize the difficulties of interpreting their words ⁶⁵.

⁶⁵cf. Xavier Leo-Dufour, SJ, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter*. London: Geoffrey Chapman 1974; cf. also Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1980.

10.] In the Mystery of Redemption, the Resurrection is not simply an appendage to the great sacrifice of Christ's human existence. This completes the Paschal Mystery with the return of Jesus to His Father, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit ⁶⁶. This divine mystery of God's Mercy is communicated through the offering of the Eucharist ⁶⁷.

11.] Jesus' return to the Father has not left the Church orphans. He is with the Church unto the consummation of the world:

a.] Paschal Faith, Hope and Charity are a community venture that move each individual toward an ever-increasing personal encounter with the Lord Jesus. The faith of Easter is one that believes Jesus is near, present, in His Church.

b.] Paschal Faith, Hope and Charity make Apostolic Missionaries of those who are open to them. Each one who has examined with the doubting Thomas the pierced hands and side of Jesus Christ is called to communicate this Good News by his life, words and deeds.

c.] St. John expressed his own Paschal Faith, Hope and Charity in the Lord Jesus Christ with the opening lines of the Epistle attributed to him. He claimed for his Subject, "Someone Who has existed from the very beginning - Someone he personally had seen, had watched with his own eyes, and touched with his hands" [cf. 1 Jn 1:1, ff.]. John "saw" and "believed", and is now communicating his witness of these extraordinary wonders of mercy.

d.] There is joy in communicating this Good News - there is deep peace in making it known. Faith is confirmed by sharing it; hope is deepened by offering others participation in it. Qualities increase as they are used - charity intensifies as it is practiced.

12.] A saying is attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola, the sense of which is: only God knows what He would do with His servant if only He were not impeded in His efforts from doing so. Or, from the gifted pen of the Evangelical theologian, Jurgen Moltmann, to whom there is attributed the statement that the original sin is not so much the titanic desire to be like God is - but, the refusal to be what God likes!

⁶⁶cf. F. X. Durwell, CSsR., *The Resurrection. A Bible Study*. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. London/Sydney: Sheed & Ward 1960.

⁶⁷cf. F.X. Durwell, CSsR., *L'eucharistie - sacrement pascal*. Paris: duCerf 1980.

13.] Paschal Faith, Hope and Love offer a different challenge - to meet this, in the Resurrection, along with the offering of a personal encounter with the Risen Lord, to all those who will seek Him with all their hearts, minds and strength - he is the bestowal of extraordinary Gifts. each of these special Gifts of the rRsen Lord is something of a share in God Himself.

2. Three Gifts of the Resurrection:

It is truly impossible to assign quantitative enumeration to the reality of the Resurrection. Nonetheless, in the account offered by the 4th Gospel of the Resurrection, some kind of an enumeration of the Gifts of God accompanying this is offered - at least for pedagogical reasons, so that in human limitations, one might penetrate the depths of this mystery of Mercy, and a deeper insight into the Mystery of God.

a. The Holy Spirit

1.] The breathing of Jesus Christ on the Apostles empowers the spiritual Resurrection of countless generations. This had already been experienced by the Woman of Samaria, by Mary Magdalen and by the sinful Apostles. This "new life" in the Spirit has been brought through the fulfillment of the symbols of the breath on the Field of the Dry Bone [cf. Ezk 37] - and even further back, breathing initial life into the dust of the soil in the First Creation.

2.] The Birth of the Church, the New People of God, comes to light from the open side of the Crucified Christ. The Holy Spirit has been compared to the "soul" of the Church, and exercises in an analogical manner, this function. With the flowing of the streams of the Living Water from the pierced side of Jesus Christ, and now the Breath of the Most High going out to the Apostles, they are empowered to remove any and all obstacles to God, by communicating His Mercy in the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church depends on the Jesus-Event, and the Pentecost-Event. Beginning with the acceptance of Mary, the Church comes into its own with the resurrection and the subsequent out-pouring of the Holy Spirit of God.

3.] When Jesus "bows His head", He offers this sign of complete *kenosis*, the total emptying of Himself, that the "Other" Paraclete might come. He returns to His Father so that the Spirit might continue His Personal Mission right now through the Apostles and human structures. Jesus "ex-spired", sent out the Holy Spirit, with His last breath. n showing the terrible Stigmata, with the sending of His Holy Spirit, and the renewed Paschal Faith, Hope and Love - as well as His Peace and

Joy - the Apostolic Mission truly goes on its own - just as the Father in His turn, had sent Jesus.

4.] The Cross can never be alienated from the Church - nor can the Church ever stop with it. The Cross is a kind of key to the Gate of Heaven: the openings in the Body of the Redeemer have served to open the hearts of the Redeemed. The Redeemer has opened the doors to the redeemed, as they are invited through the centuries to “open the doors to the Redeemer.”

5.] The Rich Pneumatology in John ⁶⁸:

a.] While there may be different meanings at times for the word “spirit”, also in John, in its different meanings the word is most associated with “gift” of God.

b.] The Spirit” is present in the life of Jesus from His conception, to His Baptism, leading Him to the desert, having been communicated without reserve [cf. Jn 3:34]. Jesus Himself would associate the Spirit with “life”, in contrast with the flesh [cf. Jn 6:63].

c.] Jesus makes the stipulation of the necessity of being born of the “water and spirit” [cf. Jn 3:5, 8]. The “remaining” of Jesus within the communicant who partakes of the flesh and blood of Jesus [cf. Jn 3:24] is associated with the Spirit Who had been communicated to us.

d.] The Gift of the Spirit is intimately associated and dependent upon the “glorification” of Jesus. Throughout John’s Gospel, there is mention of the full implications of the words from Genesis, with which the 4th Gospel begins: “In the beginning”. Jesus speaks of a New Baptism, a New Birth, New revelation, new worship. The new Paraclete enters into this order of “new beginnings”. When the streams of Living Waters do flow from the side of Christ, His prophecy has been fulfilled. It is the Resurrection, and in the breathing upon the disciple that the new order is completed. The Personal Mission of Jesus, received from the Father, will go until the end of time. Despite checks, rejections and failures, the Apostolic Mission is promised final success, in that is the very Personal Mission of Jesus.

6.] The Promises of the Paraclete [cf. Jn 14-16]

⁶⁸cf. George Montague, SM, *The Holy Spirit. Growth of a Biblical Tradition.* ib., especially pp. 333-365; cf. Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit.* London: SPCK 1976.

a.] As Jn's Gospel goes on, the personality of the "Spirit" becomes clearer. There is great emphasis on the ecclesial role of the Holy Spirit. His principal area of "competence" will be the doctrine of Jesus. With the return of Jesus to the Father, there might have been legitimate worry that His teachings somehow would not be continued. The Spirit comes to conserve the word, to insure that there will be an increasing understanding of it, through "contemplation, study, the magisterium and experience" [cf. DV 8].

b.] The mystery of Christ is communicated to succeeding generations, in an unbroken chain, through word and deed, through revelation of truth and the communication of reality. It is received in the two-fold table of God's Word and the Eucharist.

7.] The Spirit is breathed out at the Death of Jesus upon the Apostles after His Resurrection. When Jesus gives back His Spirit to the Father, His own work is completed - and there begins the era of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes as gift when Jesus "ex-spires", and breathes the power to forgive sin upon His Apostles. There is nothing that can be attributed to the Holy Spirit that is not attributed to the Resurrected Jesus⁶⁹. So, in the Letters attributed to John, the victory over sin has been obtained by the Blood of Jesus. This victory is tantamount to "life". At the same time, there is emphasis on the communication of the Spirit in Baptism, as the continuation of the entire work of Jesus. This life is continued now through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

8.] Throughout Jn's writings, the "spirit" assumes a number of characteristics:

- Cosmic: in the New Creation;
- Messianic: in the carrying out the work of Redemption;
- Eschatological: the fullness of the Spirit is reserved to the end times.

a.] The Spirit is totally committed to the work of Jesus, who had come solely for the work of the Father. The Spirit has not come for His own glory, but so that the glory of Jesus, which is that of the Father, will be understood and fathomed the more.

⁶⁹St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3; Commen. in Ephes., c. 2, lectio 5: "...whatever happens through the Holy Spirit also occurs through Christ." [cf. Aquinas Scripture Commentaries, Vol. 2, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*. Translation and Introduction by Matthew L. Lamb, OSCO. Albany NY: Magi Books, Inc. 1966, p. 110.

b.] The “Mission” now of the Spirit is principally that of insuring witness to Jesus who came in water and in blood. The Church prays to the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic consecration to take the gifts of bread and wine, and to change them into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Spirit is at work in the minds and hearts of those who will once more renew the baptism reality by this continuing incorporation into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

c.] The Holy Spirit, in the prayer of the Sacrament of reconciliation, has been sent out for the remission of sins. It is the Spirit who helps us to understand the more the sins that have been committed and the mercy of God that is about to be communicated.

b. The Gift of Forgiveness

1.] Jesus has come back to His “own” - the Gift of His Spirit was poured out of His side in the symbolism of water on Calvary - and His breath from His mouth. This Spirit is now breathed on the Apostles, in an act of a New Creation. This breathing upon His “own” is so reminiscent of the Lord “fashioning” humanity from the top soil, the silt, and breathing into this the divine breath of life.

2.] In communicating the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives His Personal Mission to perform - a Gift which the Apostles had already received: forgiveness. The “New Covenant” is here now in its fullness: deep within His people, the Lord will write this on their hearts. And they all come to “know” Him, because He will not call their sins to mind again [cf. Jr. 31:31-34].

3.] The disciples were not only the witnesses of His Personal Mission from its public beginning - they were likewise its special recipients. In this scene, there does seem to be some kind of constitution of office, or the Personal Mission of Jesus will be carried out now according to a variety of gifts among the Apostle and Disciples.

4.] Traditionally, the Catholic Church has understood this verse as the establishment of the Sacrament of Reconciliation ⁷⁰. The Document, ***Ordo Paenitentiae***, repeats this teaching. There is explained that the Eucharist was instituted as “the New Covenant unto the remission of sins”, the Blood of Christ the night He was betrayed. After His Resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit upon His

⁷⁰cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel of John, XIII-XXI*, ib., pp. 1039-1045.

Apostles, so that they would have the power of remitting, or retaining sins - and the text from John [cf. 20:19-23] is specifically cited ⁷¹.

5.] This is the new era of the Holy Spirit - the divine power of forgiving sin has been communicated and shared with His Apostles. As the Apostles will conduct the very same Mission that Jesus Himself had received from the Father, their intervention in specified areas will have the same divine efficacy as when Jesus Himself was present during His earthly sojourn. The same Spirit, present in the Resurrection of Jesus, as all throughout His life, is now most active in the spiritual coming to life of God's People in the power communicated to the Church.

6.] In John, one might distinguish "sin" in both the singular and the plural:

- in the singular: 'the sin of the world' [cf. Jn 1:29] to die in one's sin [8:21]; sin [15:22; 16:9] - not all sin is deadly [1 Jn 5:16, f.]. This almost seems to describe a condition, or a situation of sinfulness;

- in the plural: this would seem to mean the sins committed in one's life experience. In the text presently under consideration, the word is in the plural

a.] "Sin" for Jn is intimately associated with positive incredulity, the refusal to believe [cf. Jn 3:32]. There is similarly an emphasis given to hatred for Jesus, and it is this which led to His crucifixion. these would be the main emphases in Jn's presentation. Yet, the Redemption even from this sin lies with the Mystery of divine Mercy, revealed in so sublime a manner in the culminating drama of His earthly existence.

b.] Jn may emphasize less the individual "sins" that are committed - in that as being one of the leaders of the early Church his emphasis might be more ecclesial than moral. What troubles Jn more seems to be the categorical rejection of Jesus, the non-acceptance of His Person, the denial of redemption. Jn is deeply disturbed by the "world", by "darkness" - this theme is already present in his Prologue.

c.] This does not mean that Jn does not think "sins" are important. It might well be that Jn's emphasis here after the Resurrection are those "sins" which separate people from Jesus, after they have "come" to Him in the faith.

⁷¹cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Decree: **Ordo Paenitentiae**, in: *Enchiridion Vaticanum. Documenti ufficiali della Santa Sede, 1971-1973*. Vol. 4, Bologna: EDB 1978, # 2676, p. 1747

He appeals also that believers live the commandments - in the words of Jesus, this is the indication of one's authentic love for God.

d.] The victory of Jesus is also victory over sin and death. He has shown Himself to be triumphant over death by His resurrection. and in this scene following the resurrection, Jesus communicates to His Church the power of forgiving sin that will be continued in the Church until the end of time.

e.] Therefore, this power of forgiveness may not continue the general lines of Jn's Gospel. Throughout, Jn has shown greater concern for the attitudinal outright rejection of Jesus. Yet, the "ordinary" sins [that perhaps can lead to this] seem to be what are being considered in these words of Jesus, in the understanding of the Church.

f.] There is certainly no hint here that sins can be forgiven, or retained, at the whim of any minister of the sacrament. As it is Jesus' own power that is being communicated, each person truly repentant, would have a right. The discretionary power emphasizes far more the totality of power than it does the "discretion". Jesus communicates a power that is not arbitrary, but is done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The discretion of the minister is important, of course, but is always exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The discretion of the minister is put to work, in "putting on the mind of Christ Jesus" [cf. Ph 2:5], in all things. The minister of Mercy of Christ is inspired with His sentiments by the Holy Spirit - Who has come to remind" the Church of Jesus' teachings.

7.] The emphasis here is that the Apostles receive Jesus' own Personal Mission and share in it: they are to exercise their divine power in imitation of Him. This is not a power communicated to the whole community as such, as the Holy Spirit is. this final chapter of Jn places great emphasis on the apostolic group. Even in the encounter with Mary Magdalen, she is sent, it seems, to Jesus' own Apostles, upon who He confers this power of His. This gift of forgiveness does have the Church as its finality - but, the power is being conferred personally on the Apostles, and handed on to their successors, in the priestly aspect of Jesus' Personal Mission.

c. **The Apostolic Mission** ⁷²:

⁷²cf. these Notes above, pp. 52-104.

1.] The Apostles had received the gifts of the Spirit, and the forgiveness of sin. In their reception of these gifts, they also received the commitment to share these through their ministry. It is the very Mission that He personally received from the Father in which Jesus individually and personally involves each of His disciples.

2.] The Son's judgment [5:30], doctrine [7:16], His Word [12:49; 14:24;], His Glory [7:18] - are all those of the Father. Jesus shares "life" with Him, and communicates this in His "Mission.". He now invites His Apostles to a share in His own Personal Mission of Mercy.

3.] The purpose of this Mission is that the world might indeed be saved through Jesus Christ [cf. 3:17, 34] - that all indeed might draw life from Him [6:57]. Jesus has come to save the world, and this is summarized in the communication of divine Mercy.

4.] Redemption has been achieved through the terrible drama of the suffering and death, and through the glory of the resurrection [cf. Rm 4:25]. This is a definite manner in which this Personal Mission of Jesus will be carried out. There are indications in the Priestly Prayer of Farewell [cf. Jn 17] that it will not be an easy role. Jesus prays for His "own", that they may not fall away in the "ordeal" that is coming for them all. This is also evident in the description given to Peter of what lies ahead for him and for all. It seems far more than merely old age that Christ implies when he says that when Peter was young, he went wherever he chose. The Lord is warning him of a time that would be approaching when they will place a belt around Peter, and lead him where he may not have chosen to go [cf. Jn 21:18, ff.]. By His life and His witness, Jesus has set the pace - one reaches the Father solely through him [cf. Jn 14:6], and by following after Him. Wherever He is, or has been - the Companions of the Lamb are invited to follow - all the way to eternal glory.

5.] The Apostolic Mission is presented in different ways by the various evangelists:

- Mark sees it as going out to the whole of creation, proclaiming the Good News [cf. Mk 16:15].

- Matthew suggests that it means baptizing in the name of the Trinity, and teaching the observance of the commandments [cf. Mt 28:19].

- Luke speaks of witnessing and preaching the hard road of penance [cf. Lk 24:47].

- John has Jesus "consecrating" the Apostles to the Apostolic Mission of Forgiveness - "just as" He had been sent personally by His Father. While this may not

be interpreted in an excessively literal manner, there is no doubt that each and every phase of the Apostolic Mission implies “**Costly Discipleship**”.

6.] The administration of this Divine Power of Mercy over sin will always call to mind the mystery of the New Creation, and the New Exodus in the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. In the pouring out of the His Holy Spirit, and the breathing of new life into the Church through the Apostles, the message of the Stigmata offers a lesson of reality and unbounded hope. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, while committed to the Apostles, also indicates that the Church is the place where reconciliation is communicated. this will bring the community into contact with opposed realities. The Church is called to mediation between real evil, and God Himself. The following of Jesus Christ will find inspiration from these passages on the two aspects of the one Sacred Stigmata for the life-long Apostolic Mission - and be inspired with great hope for the carrying out of the mandate of Jesus Christ.

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PART FOUR A PREPARATION FOR *DIVES IN MISERICORDIA*

[November 30, 1980]

Presentation

[1] The title of Pope John Paul II's early Encyclical Letter, *On the Mercy of God*, is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: "It is God Who is rich in mercy.. [cf. Ep 2:4], Whom Jesus has revealed to us as 'Father.'

[2] The general theme of this Epistle is to explain the fact of God's bringing about the fullness of time in Jesus - that the Mystery of Jesus Christ has been brought about also in the realization of the Church. In the first part of the Letter, St. Paul offers his prayer that those who have come to the Church from paganism might come to understand the greatness of their call to the Body of Christ, which the Church is. The Apostle recalls to their minds the fact that they were dead in sin, but that they had been called personally by Jesus Christ to a new life, to the New Creation. Paul is near the end of his life and writes this Letter from prison.

[3] Paul explains that this Mercy of Christ has brought new life. The Mercy of which Paul speaks here is presented in other contexts as associated with Baptism. In his Epistle to Titus [cf. 3:5], Paul explains that in His compassion, He saves us by the cleansing water of a New Birth, and a renewal in the Holy Spirit, bringing together water and the Spirit. St. Peter's First Letter likewise associates the great Mercy of God, offering a New Birth as His children. We have a sure hope in the raising of Jesus from the dead [cf. 1 P 1:3].

[4] The "fullness" of the love with which He has loved us goes back to the Father, expressed in His sending Christ for the Redemption of the world. This "fullness" of God's love is expressed in the second part of this Letter to the Ephesians:

- in the love that Jesus showed, by offering Himself as a fragrant oblation in our place [cf. Ep 5:2];

- in the sacrificial love He expressed for the Church, in making her His spouse, washing her in the purifying waters, with the formula of words [cf. Ep 5:25].

[5] Baptism, therefore, is a concrete expression of this "sacrificial love" of God. The merciful love of God has the extraordinary capacity to make live that which was dead in sin. "Life with Christ" would not mean a kind of "ablative of accompaniment" - in saying that two thieves were crucified "with" Christ, "along-side of," "at the same time as". This life was communicated in the life-giving death of Jesus Christ. Baptism unites us with Christ: we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus [cf. Rm

6: 1, ff.; Col 2:11,ff.]. This life in common with Christ also brings people more in harmony in one single existence. The great gift of divine Mercy is life shared with the Son of God - meant to be shared also in the community, and comes the object of Mission.

[6] Through Baptism, each one is already sharing in the resurrection and the Ascension. In its Head, the Church is already in heaven, with the Trinity. This is the great miracle of God's Mercy: we were dead through sin, He brought us to life ⁷³. For Paul's key expression that God is "rich in mercy" there is indeed a lengthy OT preparation.

I.] AN EXODUS ANTIPHON

For want of a better title for the expression, this one might serve in that it indicates that it seems we are dealing with a Covenant Formula address of God: ***Yahweh, Yahweh, a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness, for thousands He maintains His kindness, forgives faults, transgressions, sins...*** [cf. Ex 34:6]. With variations, this formula appears with such frequency that it seems most likely that it was some kind of a Liturgical Formula.

A.] The Pentateuch

1. Exodus 20:5, ff.

a. The formula appears for the first time, as we have it, in the Decalogue dictated by God Himself In giving reasons for the First Commandment, the Word of God reveals that He is a Jealous God Who does punish the faults of the fathers in the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, but that His kindness reaches out to the thousands.

b. In this commandment, there is give the "ground", or the reason for never bowing down before false gods - showing that this would have been the original context of the formula. It is seen as a "catena of older formulae" ⁷⁴ Even though the divine justice will lash out he to "the fourth generation", divine mercy extends for a thousand generations: this is mercy almost without measure.

⁷³cf. Heinrich Schlier, *La Lettera agli Efesini- Comentario teologico del NT*. [traduzione italiana di Omero Soffriti]. Second Edition. Brescia: Paideia editrice 1973.

⁷⁴cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus - OT Library*. London: SCM Press, Ltd. 1974, pp. 404, ff.

c. Perhaps even more than any fear of punishment - or even an 'interested' hope in some reward, the ancient legislator was hoping in the zeal of the Israelites assembled to carry out this injunction. The Lord treats Israel as a loving parent would his/her own children ⁷⁵.

d. The Jealousy of God is found often in formulations that seem to be professions of faith in God [cf. Ex 34:14; Nb 14:18; Dt 4:24; 6:15, and others]. It implies biblically a kind of exclusive love, from which one would not like to be separated. It is stated that the idea of strictly individual retribution will come only much later [cf. Ezk 18]. Throughout this formula, there is a clear indication of the contrast between what flows to the 4th generation, and the limitless mercy that God extends ⁷⁶.

2. Exodus 34:6

a. In the same Book of Exodus, there is a liturgical passage seen to be one of "re-making the Covenant." While the entire chapter 34 is subject to widespread debate and difference of opinion, there is much agreement on verse 6. The fact that it recurs so often throughout the rest of the OT is some indication of the near unanimity on the understanding of the Person of God. The formula, placed here in the "Renewal of the Covenant", might indicate that this is a formulation that had resulted from some personal "experience" of God ⁷⁷. The whole basis of Israel's faith was on the faithfulness of God in giving them a base!

b. Once again, Moses receives the Divine Name in a kind of theophany. earlier, in the burning bush [cf. Ex 3:15], God had shared His "metaphysical" Name. Here, in c. 34, the dDvine Name is communicated and also the fact that God is a merciful Redeemer. This second revelation of the Divine Name associates the divine attributes and explains the relationship existing among them. Above, this appeared in the context of the Decalogue [cf. Ex 20:5, ff.] - while here the emphasis is clearly upon the forgiveness of God.

⁷⁵cf. Louis Pirot and Albert Clamer, *La Sainte Bible*. Tome 1/2. Exode. Paris: Letouzey et Ane, Editeurs 1956, p. 177.

⁷⁶cf. Frank Michaeli, *Le livre de l'Exode Commentaire de l'AT*. Neuchatel [Switzerland]: Delachaux et Niestle 1974, pp. 178, ff.

⁷⁷cf. B.S. Childs, *ib.*, p. 612.

c. Throughout the centuries, the inspired writers of the OT will return to this liturgical formula, communicated in the restoration of the Covenant that Israel unilaterally had broken through her infidelity ⁷⁸.

d. A theophany of this type would later be experienced by Elijah on this same Mountain, in a cave. God was not in the mighty wind, nor in the powerful earthquake. He was not in the fire. But, God did come to the Prophet in the gentle breeze [cf. 1 K 19:9-18]. The communications of God will no longer be of the spectacular, awe-inspiring weather phenomena, such as the storms, lightning bolts, fearsome thunder. God will come now in much more ordinary channels ⁷⁹. The Personal Mission of the Risen Lord will be communicated also to the Apostles after the Resurrection, with the gentle breath of the Risen One.

e. Once more, the voice came from the fire and the smoke, in another theophany. The Lord Himself makes a proclamation, in which there is offered for posterity, a theological synthesis of Israel's belief ⁸⁰. This has been the result of a series of divine "wonders", interventions in Israel's history, to share with this lowly People, the infinite Mercy of the Father.

3. Numbers 14:18

a. The passage appears in response to the rebellion of Israel - "the whole community" cried out, wailed all night. "All" the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. As Mediator, Moses falls prostrate before the Lord, and offers his prayer of intercession. In this, he shows "servant-like" qualities, interceding for the very People who had insulted him. And Moses "reminds" the Lord of His own Revelation and theophany.

b. Moses' reaction to the defiant self-will of the People is intercession in their behalf, notwithstanding all the insults. So, Moses asks for the power of God to be made manifest in His forgiveness of this People. Very often it is at least thought that the merciful God is more revealed in the NT - and with the coming of Christ, this is undoubtedly true. However, the NT is so totally "new" it needed a long and gradual preparation for it. Already the OT has established the major importance of

⁷⁸cf. Louis Pirot and Albert Clamer, *ib.*, p. 269.

⁷⁹cf. John Gray, *I and II Kings - OT Library*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 2nd Impression 1980, pp.410,ff.

⁸⁰cf. Frank Michaeli, *ib.*, pp. 285,ff.

the mercy of God. He reveals Himself in His essential condition as loving and forgiving
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c. Prayer is often the response of Moses to the complaints of the Israelites in the desert [cf. Ex 17:4; 32:19, ff.]; Nb 11:11, ff.; 12:13; 16:4; 17:11, ff.]. The present text seems to be made up of his earlier request for pardon for the making of the Golden Calf [cf. Ex 32:11, ff.], and the theophany that took place for the restoration of the Covenant. There is a strong profession of Israel's faith in the merciful power and faithfulness of God. There is a common ploy in the prayers of the leaders of ancient Israel 82.

4. Deuteronomy 5:9, ff.:

a. This passage is found in the context in the literary form of a preaching of the Covenant. The essential idea is that it is God Himself Who has established a Covenant, and He wants to renew it today, one of the fundamental liturgical themes of the entire Book. What makes this Covenant so special is that God has written it with His own hand [cf. Ex 31:18; 34:1; 24:12; Dt 9:10; 10:4].

b. This is the promise of the divine *hesed*, the difficult-to-translate "Covenant Love.: Here, commandment is based on promise. The Exodus experience was already a great proof of God's love 83 - so, the Deuteronomist, perhaps any centuries after the original Exodus, is inculcating once ore the well known words of long ago.

B.] The Prophets

1. This liturgical antiphon found its way into a number of the Prophets. In the so-called **Testament of Isaiah** [cf. **Is 30:8-18**] the final line invokes the gracious pity of the Lord. Isaiah offers his own "beatitutde" for all those who hope in the Lord [cf. Is 30:18].

2. In the "Additions to the Book of Consolation", there is recorded the symbolic incident of the Prophet buying a field in a land about to be invaded and defeated. The

81cf. John Sturdy, *Numbers. The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the NEB*. Cambridge University Press 1976, p. 103.

82cf. J. DeVaulx, *Les Nombres. Sources Bibliques*. Paris: Gabalda 1972, p.173.

83cf. P.G. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy. The New International Commentary of the OT*. Grand Rapids MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company 1976, p. 155.

armies of Babylon were at the gate - and this purchase was a sign of confidence and hope. **Jeremiah** professes his great faith that “nothing is impossible to God” - in itself, a kind of Antiphon of Hope. Jeremiah then quotes a prt of the Liturgical Confession of Hope, in saying that the Lord offers His merciful kindness to thousands [cf. **Jr 32:17, f.**]. To “substantiate” his argument, Jr calls upon the great mystery of the Lord creating the heavens and the earth, and performed many redemptive wonders throughout Israel’s history

3. In Nahum’s “Prelude” [1:3], he offers an alphabetical Psalm. While it is on the “Wrath of God”, Nahum seems to quote a segment of the “Exodus Antiphon”. He prays: the Lord indeed is slow to anger, but He is immense in power! this is the “Prelude” to the Oracle against Nineveh.

4. Jonah 4:2 quotes the same Antiphon in his prayer to the Lord. He professes that indeed he did know that God was a God of tenderness and compassion for the city. The final chapter of the Prophet is a Revelation in gentle words of the Lord’s Mercy on all that He has created. This is a view of the Merciful Creator.

5. In Joel’s [2:12, ff.] beautiful “Call to Repentance, he records the Lord’s well known saying: Come back to Me with all your heart! The Prophet presents the God to Whom the People will return as a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness. The God of this People is ready to relent. This is a Penitential Liturgy in the time of a plague of locusts. The Lord does take pity on this People, in response to their Lamentation Liturgy [cf. **Jl 12:18**].

6. When the Israelites had finally come “home” after the long Exile in Babylon, there is the **Ceremony of Atonement [cf. Ne 9]**. There is a Lamentation not unlike that of Joel [cc. 1-2; cf. also some of the Psalms, as 74; 79; 83]. In the restoration of the Covenant, there is a rapid review of Genesis and Exodus, a kind of “Historical Prologue.” After the goodness of God in the splendor of Creation, in choosing Abraham, and in assisting the Israelites in their liberation from the house of slavery, the passage recalls the sin of pride and obstinacy of the People of God. In response to this, the Lord met them as the God of forgiveness, grace is abounding in kindness and mercy. This faithful God did not forsake them [cf. **Ne 9:17, 31**].

C.] The Wisdom Tradition

When **Sirach** offers his “instructions”, among them is a chapter on “The Fear of God in the Time of an Ordeal” - a theme particularly dear to the Psalmists. Sirach establishes the point that there was never anyone who steadfastly feared Him and

was left forsaken. The reason is, in the traditional faith of the Chosen People, that the Lord is indeed compassionate and full of Mercy. He redeems those in distress and forgives those in sin [cf. **Si 2:11**].

D.] The Psalms

Since this “Exodus Antiphon” expresses in synthesis the basic faith of Israel, there is no wonder that it was sung in Israel’s worship. This would make of the Psalms a good source for reflecting on the use of the principle. It is found in the following circumstances:

1. Ps 86:15: Prayer in Ordeal

a. This Psalm is seen as an “individual lament” - as so often is the case in such compositions, based perhaps on the idea of “corporate personality”, the anonymous Psalmist’s experiences might be read as a “type”, or understood in a general way. There is much evidence that the Psalm has been tailored, or written, or cultic purposes⁸⁴.

b. The Psalm contains the great cultic profession of Israel’s faith: the Lord is always merciful, always tender-hearted, slow to anger, always faithful, forgiving. Before any threat, this confession offers the deep interior response.

c. The “occasion” of this great act of vibrant faith and genuine humility may have been the fact that there was a time in the Psalmist’s life that he was not following the way of the Lord, faithfully, fearing His Name [cf. v.11]. There is sublime trust expressed throughout the Psalm. The unknown poet calls upon God’s promised fidelity, His pity, in Israel’s regard. He remembers the Covenant that God has made with this People. There is a profession of faith here that considers the very nature of God to be pity, good, forgiving, tender-hearted, merciful⁸⁵.

2. Ps 103:8

a. This is one of the great Psalms, flowing from one’s personal experience of the Mercy of God. This realization that the Psalmist has come to in his own life had

⁸⁴cf. Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms - OT Library*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1975, 4th Impression, pp. 575, ff..

⁸⁵cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l’homme. Etude textuelle, litteraire et doctrinale*. Belgique:Duculot 1977, Vol. 2, p. 651.

already been promulgated by the sacred writings of ancient Israel. The faith of his ancestors and his lived experiences have come together in this Psalm, and offers to posterity a striking profession of faith, and confession of great hope. Israel's history had already offered the "Exodus Antiphon" - but, now this unknown person's own life has confirmed this principle: God really is merciful - slow to anger - He is compassionate - He never treats sinners as their conduct deserves ⁸⁶.

b. This magnificent profession and praise of Divine Mercy is seen as the basic divine attribute. This is why God regularly treats those who will turn toward Him. This Canticle is simply one of the most sublime expressions of OT faith in God. There simply is no other god that can compare with this one: He "remembers" that we are dust. Coming from such lowly origins, the Lord is moved to great pity toward us ⁸⁷.

3. **Ps 111:4**

a. This is a festive poem - one after another, the great attributes, or "divine attitudes", are celebrated. The Lord's continuing sway over both nature and history is praised once more, in sublime fashion. the "wonders" of God, of the sacred past, are being re-lived, re-presented to a community concerned with the living of the Covenant. The ***Zikkaron***, the "sacred memorial", is being celebrated in the context of a Covenant Renewal. The greatest miracle in Israel's memory of God's Mercy was their deliverance from the House of Slavery ⁸⁸. Later, the wonders of creation were also added to this "repertoire" - perhaps under the influence of their captors in their exile into Babylon, they began to ponder more the wonders of Creation.

b. This Psalm 111 has 22 lines, alphabetically arranged, according to the Hebrew letters. This poem offers a kind of synthesis of faith, a sense of completion. This is the piety of ancient Israel in adoration, concluding with the injunction to praise Him forever. God has made known His attributes to the Assembly. they are invited to look at the wonders of Creation, which will lead to a contemplation of their Maker [cf. Ps 103:8; 104; 106:7; cf. also Pss 8; 19]. The gathering is then invited to accept the Lord's permission to commemorate these wonders - this is the place of the "Memorial."

⁸⁶cf. Arthur Weiser, ib., pp. 655, ff.

⁸⁷cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l'homme. Etude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale*. Belgique: Duculot 1977, Vol. 2, p. 651.

⁸⁸cf. A. Weiser, ib., pp. 697, ff.

c. The basic explanation of all this splendor is that God is full of mercy and compassion for His People. This offers a kind of “spring-board”, then, for reflection on God’s wonders in history ⁸⁹.

4. Ps 145:8

a. This is a poem which conceivably could have served as grace at the noon meal: You give food in due season [cf. v. 15]. This is a poem that seems to praise the Lord of the harvest - perhaps an autumn Canticle for the Renewal of the Harvest ⁹⁰. The Lord indeed has been faithful toward Israel. He acts solely out of love [cf. v. 17].

b. This is the last of the alphabetical Psalms. It is a Canticle of sublime praise of the Creator, Who continues His wonders in Providence. Some interpreters see this as a kind of “anthology” of praises for the creative wonders of God, and His Providence toward all of Creation. This Psalm brings together the masculine *hesed*, and the feminine tenderness, coming perhaps from the root word meaning “mother’s womb”. The wonders of Creation also establish His power over history. In creating, God has shown Himself as “Father” ⁹¹.

c. With this solid OT background, the faith of Israel has become also the basic belief of the Church, as we read in the beautiful Encyclical being studied:

Even the OT teaches that, although justice is an authentic virtue in man, and in God signifies transcendent perfection, nevertheless ‘love’ is greater than justice. Love, so conditions justice, and, in the final analysis, justice serves love. The primacy and superiority of love vis-a-vis justice - this is a mark of the whole of revelation - are revealed precisely through mercy.... ⁹²

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⁸⁹cf. Louis Jacquet, ib., Vol. 3, pp. 233, ff.

⁹⁰cf. A. Weiser, ib., pp. 825, ff.

⁹¹cf. Louis Jacquet, ib., Vol. 3, pp. 688, ff.; especially pp. 695, f.

⁹²cf. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia*, November 30, 1980, n. 4, Vatican Edition, p. 23.

II.] ***Aperite Portas Redemptori***

Presentation:

[1.] Keeping in mind that the “Paschal Mystery” is the culmination of this revealing and effecting of mercy ⁹³, and the Cross is also a radical Revelation of Mercy ⁹⁴ - it is to this Mystery the Church returns throughout the generations to understand ever more the basic nature of the God she worships.

[2] In recent years, some of the attention of the Church has been devoted to this “healing wound” in the side of Jesus Christ. With the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, ***Haurietis Aquas***, there was afforded a magnificent preparation also for ***Dives in Misericordia***, of Pope John Paul II, and also his Letter, ***Aperite Portas Redemptori***.

[3] Pope Pius XII applied the symbolism present in the wounded side of Jesus Christ on the cross to the Church’s Devotion to the Sacred Heart. In his Encyclical ⁹⁵ the Pontiff’s emphasis is rightly on the divine “Heart” as a legitimate symbol of that unbounded love.

[a] In the mystery of the outpouring of His Precious Blood, there is evidenced a kind of “**espousals**” with the Church. Pius XII took the Patristic explanation that the Church was born from the wounded side of Christ - as well as “the stream of sacramental grace” which issued forth. St. Thomas Aquinas is noted for his synthesis of the teaching of the Fathers: he associates the Blood with the Eucharist and the water with Baptism - which cleanses by virtue of the Blood of Jesus Christ ⁹⁶.

[b] The Pope here [# 78] applies the symbolism of the Wound in the side of Jesus Christ to the sacred Heart of Jesus - and calls it “the wound of the Most Sacred Heart.” The “wounded heart”, then, offers a striking symbol of the eternal love of God, translated into the mystery of the merciful Redemption.

[c] In showing that devotion to the Sacred Heart is simply an outgrowth of devotion to Christ’s sacred humanity, this love for the Man, Jesus, has been practiced

⁹³cf. ib., # 7, p. 39.

⁹⁴cf. ib., # 8, p. 42.

⁹⁵Pope Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas. The Sacred Heart Encyclical*. Orlando, Florida: Sacred Heart Publication Center 1974. cf. especially ## 75-78, 91-93.

⁹⁶St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 66, a. 2.

especially by the Mother of God. Through history, the Apostles and Fathers of the Church have been able to adore also the sacred wounds by which He was torn, in achieving redemption. The example of Thomas is presented as one to follow: the once doubting Thomas becomes a faithful witness, “mounting up from the wounded human nature of the Lord to the majesty of His Divine Person” .

[d] It would be useful to reflect briefly on this gradual advance to a specific devotion - and to a Holy Year of Redemption and Mercy.

A.] Patristic Reflections

Perhaps the great single emphasis in the writings of the Fathers would be placed on the Church being born from the side of Christ ⁹⁷ and the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist as represented in the water and blood of Calvary. However, there are other considerations, and we will consider the following:

- the Holy Spirit;
- the Church as Spouse of the Wounded Christ;
- Baptism;
- Eucharist'
- “A Door open unto Salvation” ⁹⁸.

1. The Holy Spirit

a. In his *Adversus Haereses*, St. Irenaeus writes that wherever the Church is, there the Holy Spirit is. And wherever there is the authentic Spirit of God, there, too, is every grace. There are those, he adds, who do not nourish themselves from the breast of their Mother, but dig for themselves earthly cisterns. Such as these reject the Spirit, Who would instruct them ⁹⁹.

⁹⁷cf. Sebastian Tromp, SJ, “De Nativitate Ecclesiae ex Corde Iesu in Cruce”, in: *Gregoianum* [XIII] 1932, pp. 489-527.

⁹⁸For these texts, cf. Alfredo Carminati, SCJ, “E’ venuto nell’acqua e nel sangue. *Riflessione biblico-patristica*. Bologna: EDB 1979, pp. 89-122, cf. also Edward Malatesta, SJ, “Blood and Water from the Pierced Side of Christ”, in: *Segni e sacramenti nel vangelo di Giovanni*. Sacramentum 3. Studia Anselmiana 66. Roma: Editrice Anselmiana 1977, pp. 179-181.

⁹⁹*Adv. Haer.*, III, 24. PG 7, 966 - *Sources Chretiennes* 211, p. 474..

b. St. Isidore interprets the rock that has been struck to be Christ. When He was pierced, all water poured forth from Him. The wood of the Cross served Him as a kind of staff, such as the one Moses used to draw water from the stone. Jesus used His “staff” so that graces would pour out for believers. When Jesus was struck on the Cross, He poured out for those who are thirsty, the grace of the purifying bath, and the Holy Spirit ¹⁰⁰.

c. Following His Passion, what else came from the Lord if not a river from His Body - asks St. Ambrose. From His side surged water and blood, with which He brought joy to the hearts of all, since with this stream He washed away the sins of the whole world. Everyone is called to the grace of Jesus Christ, as He Himself said: ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink ...’ To some, who do come, through the Spirit, there is given the language of wisdom; to others, the faith by means of the same Spirit; to still others, the gift of healing by means of one and the same Spirit; and to others, the power of miracles... All of these gifts are worked by one and the same Spirit, Who distributes these as He sees fit. These gifts are the surging waves of the river, whenever it is poured out with the division of grace of ministries, a variety of activities and virtues. From these currents of flowing water of the river, the city is irrigated, in which the Lord dwells ¹⁰¹.

2. The Church as Spouse of the Wounded Christ: ¹⁰²

a. Greek Fathers:

1.] Origen wrote that it was the Church that came out of the side of Christ, as His Spouse. He found in her His Spouse, a pure and strong woman, who would keep fidelity in His regard. the Spouse now awaits her once more in heaven ¹⁰³.

2.] St. Epiphanius made the comparison between the body that the Lord had formed for Himself in Mary - whereas, the Church He formed by drawing

¹⁰⁰cf. Quaest. in V.T., in Exodum 24 - PL 83, 199].

¹⁰¹cf. In Ps 45: 5 - PL 1194.

¹⁰²cf. Sebastian Tromp, SJ, “Ecclesia, Sponsa Christi” in: *Corpus Christi quod est Ecclesia*. I, “Introductio Generalis”. Roma: Gregoriana 1946, pp.26-53, passim.

¹⁰³cf. Exp. in Prov. 31 - PG 17, 251.

her from His own side. When His side was wounded - the mysteries of His Blood and Water were redeemed in us ¹⁰⁴.

3.] St. John Chrysostom developed this theme by asking how can we know that the Church was formed from the side of Christ. The saint responds by saying it is Scripture that tells us this.

a.] After Christ was lifted up on the Cross, and had expired, a soldier drew near and pierced His Sacred Side, and blood and water issued forth. The whole Church has been formed from that blood and water. It is as happened to Adam who was asleep, and a woman was formed from him - so, from the deceased Christ, the Church was formed from His rib ¹⁰⁵.

b.] The Saint also explained that it was no accident that water and blood flowed from the side of Christ. The Church was formed of these two fonts. The “initiates” experience this when they are regenerated by means of the water - and when by means of the flesh and blood, they are nourished. Whenever anyone of us approaches this tremendous chalice, we should do so as though we were going to drink from His side ¹⁰⁶.

c.] The Saint had no hesitancy in saying that the water represented Baptism, and the Blood was the symbol of the “Mysteries”. In opening the side of Christ, there was opened a breach in the walls of the holy temple - and there I found the treasure, and I have been enriched by it. It was the same with the Lamb: the Victim was offered in holocaust, and I have harvested salvation, the fruit of this immolation. Do not pass before this mystery of the flowing water and blood with indifference. There is still another mystical interpretation. In addition to the Sacraments that have flowed from His side, it is also from here that the Lord has formed His Church, just as Eve had been formed from the side of Adam. In this same way, Christ has given us the Blood and the water, flowing from His side, to form the Church ¹⁰⁷.

4.] St. John Damascene: states unequivocally that Jesus Christ has formed the Church from His own side - just as Eve had been made from the side of Adam. This is why Paul says [cf. Ep 5:30] that we are all of His flesh and bone,

¹⁰⁴cf. Adv. Haer. Bk III, t. II - PG 42, 729-732.

¹⁰⁵cf. St. John Chrysostom, *Quales ducendae uxores*, 3 - PG 51, 229.

¹⁰⁶cf. St. John Chrysostom, *In Io. hom.* 85, 3 - PG 59, 463.

¹⁰⁷cf. St. John Chrysostom, in: *Sources Chretiennes* 50, pp. 160-162.

referring to His side. Just as in the beginning the Lord took a rib from Adam, now He has given us His Blood and water, and has formed the Church ¹⁰⁸.

b. Latin Fathers

1.] St. Ambrose: speaks of the life, which is the Church: this Life has come to be from His side - in Him, Eve has been resurrected ¹⁰⁹. In his Commentary on Luke, St. Ambrose continues this theme of “life” coming from the sacred side of Jesus Christ. This is the side of the Second Adam. The first Adam became a living spirit, while the New Adam is a **vivifying Spirit**. The New Adam is Jesus Christ, the side of Christ is the life of the Church. Therefore, we are all members of His body, made of His flesh and bone ¹¹⁰.

2.] St. Jerome: continues this theme: Eve had been made from the rib of Adam, and was a type of the Church ¹¹¹. Adam was the first Prophet to prophesy Jesus Christ and the Church. Our Lord and Savior did come on earth, for His Body, the Church. He formed this, by drawing her from His side ¹¹².

3.] St. Augustine: as might be expected, it is the great “Doctor of Grace” who refers to this theme the most often. He states that Adam was the type of Christ, as Eve was of the Church. While Christ was sleeping on the Cross, from His side flowed the sacraments of the Church ¹¹³. While He slept the sleep of the Passion, He formed the Church as His Spouse. Therefore, the Church as Spouse was formed from His side and of the faith in the Passion and in Baptism ¹¹⁴. The side of the dead Christ was struck with a lance, so that there would flow from it the Sacraments with which the Church was formed ¹¹⁵.

a.] In parallel with the first Adam, from the side of Jesus Christ was formed His Spouse, the Church. Struck by the lance, the Sacraments of the

¹⁰⁸St. John Damascene, *Sacra Parellela*, tit. VI -PG 95.

¹⁰⁹St. Ambrose, *En. in Ps 36, 19* - PL 14, 1032.

¹¹⁰St. Ambrose, *Exp. in Luc.* bk II 86 - PL 15, 1667.

¹¹¹St. Jerome, *Contra Joan. Hiersol.*, 22 - PL 23, 389.

¹¹²St. Jerome, *In Ep. ad Ep.* bk III, 5, 32 - PL 26, 569.

¹¹³St. Augustine, *In Ps 40, 9* - PL 21, 802.

¹¹⁴St. Augustine, *De Gen. contra Manich.* II, 24 - PL 34, 216.

¹¹⁵St. Augustine, *In Jo. Ev.* IX, 10 - PL 35, 1463.

Church flowed therefrom ¹¹⁶. Adam was the figure of Christ, and Eve of the Church. When was Eve formed? While Adam slept! And when did the Sacraments of the Church flow from the side of Christ? While He slept on the Cross ¹¹⁷

b.] Augustine asked why would God want to draw Eve from Adam while he slept. His response was so that this would serve as a preparation for the day when the Spouse of Christ would be drawn from His side while He slept. While He hung from the Cross, His side was struck by a lance, and the Sacraments of the Church flowed from this wound ¹¹⁸.

c.] St. Augustine interpreted the promise of Genesis in this way: the Woman will overcome the serpent and crush its head [cf. Gn 3:15]. This is a great mystery, and is the figure of the future Church, made from the side of Jesus Christ, the Spouse, sleeping on the Cross. Adam was the figure of the future Adam Who was to come. All of this was prefigured: the Church was made from the side of the Lord sleeping on the Cross. From His side, flowed the Sacraments of the Church ¹¹⁹.

d.] The Spirit, the Blood and the water - all poured forth from the side of Jesus Christ. The meaning is that the Church is born from this Blood and from this Water. When Adam was already sleeping in Paradise, so Eve was born from His side ¹²⁰.

e.] The birth of Eve from the side of Adam was already a prophecy of Jesus Christ and the Church. The sleep of Adam was the death of Christ - without life, and hanging from the Cross, He was pierced. Blood and water poured forth: we know that these were the Sacraments from which the Church was born ¹²¹.

4.] St. Leo the Great: with this repetition on the part of St. Augustine, the doctrine became most common among the Latin Fathers. St. Leo wrote that the Church came forth from the side of her Spouse, when she received the

¹¹⁶St. Augustine, *In Jo. Ev.* XV, 8 - PL 35, 1513.

¹¹⁷St. Augustine, *En in Ps 40*, 9 - PL 34, 461.

¹¹⁸St. Augustine, *En in Ps 56*, 5 - PL 668.

¹¹⁹St. Augustine, *En in Ps 103*, 26 - PL 37, 1381; cf. also *En in Ps 126*, 2 - PL 37, 1672; cf. also *En in Ps 127*, 3 - PL 37, 1684.

¹²⁰St. Augustine, *Serm. V*, 3 - PL 38, 55 - cf. *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, XLI, p. 53, cf. also *Serm. CCXVIII*, 14 - PL 1087.

¹²¹St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XXII, 17 - PL 41, 778; cf. also *Contra Faust. Manich.* XII, 8, 16 - PL 42, 258, 263.

Sacrament of Redemption, and of Regeneration from the side of the crucified, flowing with Blood and water ¹²².

5.] St. Maximus of Tours: wrote that while from the side of the first Adam was formed Eve, the Mother of the Living - so, in the Person of Our Lord was the Church formed, Genetrix of all the Faithful. The Church rose from the sacred side of Him, and from His salutary wound ¹²³. The Saint wrote that in the first created being there was already prefigured the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The comparison is that just as Adam, waking from sleep, recognized that Eve had been formed from His side, so Christ - in His Resurrection, has built the Church from the Wound in His side ¹²⁴. The Mystery of the first parents at the time of the birth of the world is fulfilled in the birth of the Church from the Wound of Jesus Christ ¹²⁵.

6.[St. Gregory of Tours: noted that prior to sinning, the first man, Adam, already was the announcement, was the type of the Lord, our Redeemer. In the sleep of His Passion, water and blood poured out from His side. From this, the Church appeared, virgin and immaculate, redeemed by the Blood, purified by the water, without any stain ¹²⁶.

7.] St. Isidore: likewise saw the parallel: as Adam's wife was drawn from his side, so, the side of Jesus Christ, was pierced with a lance; and from this poured the sacraments of His Blood with which the Church was formed ¹²⁷.

8.] St. Bede, the Venerable: he, too, was the heir to the preceding testimony, repeated it, and added something to it. Just as the woman was drawn from the side of the man, this was necessary to recommend the strength of their union. The fact that the woman was drawn from his side while he slept was done in virtue of a more sublime mystery. This meant that from the side of Christ, asleep in death on the Cross, the Sacraments of Salvation would one day flow. With His Blood

¹²²St. Leo the Great, *Ep* 59, 4 - PL 54, 871.

¹²³St. Maximus of Tours, *Hom* 55 - PL 57, 355.

¹²⁴St. Maximus of Tours, *Serm.* 30 - PL 57, 596.

¹²⁵St. Maximus of Tours, *Serm.* 34, 19 - PL 57, 601-602, 883; cf. also *Hom* 2 - PL 57, 918.

¹²⁶St. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Francorum*, I, 1 - PL 71, 163.

¹²⁷St. Isidore, *Quaest. in V.T.: In Gn* 3, 8 - PL 83, 217.

and water from His side, the Church was made ¹²⁸. The Church was formed from the Sacraments that flowed from it ¹²⁹.

3. **Baptism:** this is a fairly common teaching of the Fathers:

a. **St. Didymus:** quoting Paul in his discussion of the Trinity, the Saint states that it is only fitting that the Holy Spirit is mentioned with the water. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, all have drunk from the same spiritual drink, by drinking from the Rock which followed them. All have been refreshed by one sole Spirit. It is fitting that one would see both Christ and the Spirit in the symbol of the water. Without the baptismal water, never will Christ or the Spirit come to anyone ¹³⁰.

b. **Tertullian:** saw this symbolism. He wrote concerning Baptism that really two baptisms flowed from the wounded side of Christ. Those who have believed in His Blood, were then also washed in the water - and those who have been washed with the water, also have the duty of being washed with His Blood ¹³¹. Martyrdom will be another Baptism. From the wounded side of Christ have flowed both water and blood, in preparation for the two fonts ¹³².

c. **St. Jerome:** states unequivocally that the side of Jesus Christ was struck, and at the same time, there were poured out the Sacraments of Baptism and of Martyrdom ¹³³.

d. **St. Augustine:** saw the first convert of the Passion of Christ, the Good Thief, being reborn, as it were, by the baptismal font of the waters flowing from the wounded side of the Lord ¹³⁴.

4. **Eucharist:**

a. **St. Ambrose:** in near poetic language, the Saint speaks of the two sacraments flowing from the side of Jesus Christ: the water flowed as the Font of

¹²⁸St. Bede, *Hexam.* I - PL 91, 51.

¹²⁹St. Bede, *In Pentateuch., comment. in Gn 2* - PL 91, 210.

¹³⁰St. Didymus, *De Trin. Bk II, 12* - PG 39, 689.

¹³¹Tertullian, *De Bapt.* 16 - PL 1, 1326.

¹³²Tertullian, *Lib. de Puc.*, 22 - PL 2, 1028.

¹³³St. Jerome, *Ep 69, 6* - PL 22, 660.

¹³⁴St. Augustine, *De Anima, Bk 1, 9, 11* - PL 44, 480.

Baptism, and the Blood flowed as the Price of our Redemption. The water has washed us, and the Blood has purchased us ¹³⁵. The great Bishop of Milan asked himself why it was that Jesus was not wounded in the side before dying. His answer was that the sacraments of the altar are not given prior to Baptism. First comes Baptism, that is, a share in the death of Jesus Christ. Only on this condition can one share, then, in the Chalice. the Saint urged that all would drink of this price of our Redemption, and in this way, Redemption comes to us ¹³⁶.

b. **St. Augustine:** his beautiful expression was that this Sacrament of Hope flowed from the side of Jesus Christ ¹³⁷. He writes that the believer should approach the Altar of the Body of the Lord, partake in it. Recognize, he teaches, in the Bread the One Who was hung from the Cross - and recognize in the Chalice how much flowed from His wounded side ¹³⁸.

c. **St. Leo the Great:** stated that the Blood and water flowed from the side of Jesus Christ, so that the Church might be inundated by this Font, and nourished by this Chalice ¹³⁹.

d. **St. Bede the Venerable:** identified the water from the side of Jesus Christ as Baptism, with which we are washed - and the Blood of the Wound of Christ as the means by which we are sanctified. through these Mysteries of the Sacred Side of Jesus, we ascend from the present life of the Pilgrim Church on earth to life of eternal beatitude ¹⁴⁰.

e. **St. Cyril of Alexandria:** noted that from the Pierced Side of the Lord there poured out His Blood mixed with water. He reasoned that the Lord in this fact has proposed to us a figure and a pledge of the mystical blessings of the Eucharist and also Baptism ¹⁴¹. There is in this a two-fold renewal: that of the Baptistery, which vests us with the stole of immortality; and the other coming to life, whereby we are regenerated at the divine table ¹⁴².

¹³⁵St. Ambrose, *Lib de Bened. Patriarch. 4, 24* - PL 14, 715.

¹³⁶St. Ambrose, *In Luc., Lib X, 135* - PL 15, 1931.

¹³⁷St. Augustine, PL 41, 472.

¹³⁸St. Augustine, *Sermo III, 2* - PL 46, 827.

¹³⁹St. Leo the Great, *Ep 28, 5* - PL 54, 701.

¹⁴⁰St. Bede, *Hom 22* - PL 94, 119.

¹⁴¹St. Cyril, *In Jn. Ev. bk XII, 19, 32-37* - PG 74, 677.

¹⁴²St. Cyril, *De Incarn. Dom . 27* - PG 75, 1468.

f. **St. Thomas Aquinas**: is the heir to this solid tradition when he writes that from the Side of Christ, there flowed water for the font and blood for the Redemption. the Blood pertains to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the water to the Sacrament of Baptism ¹⁴³.

5. **A Door Unto Salvation**

a. In the writings attributed to John, there is the comparison of Jesus as the “door”: in the rather complex Jn 10, Jesus is the “door”, precisely as Shepherd. He is the one way to the Father [cf. Jn 14:4, ff.]. He is the exclusive revealer, as the One Who has been sent by the Father ¹⁴⁴, As a “Gate” may swing both ways, the implication is that Jesus is the sole way to the sheep - and He is the only Path for the flock to follow to reach the Father ¹⁴⁵

b. The Apocalypse uses this image in several passages. In the Letter to the Church of Philadelphia, the Faithful are told that the Lord has opened a door in front of them that no one will be able to close [cf. Rv. 3:8]. The author of Revelations here reflects the imagery of the Prophet Isaiah [cf. 22:22], in that the Messiah holds the “key” of David. however, Paul uses the concept of the “open door” more in a Missionary context [cf. 1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12] ¹⁴⁶. Others see “the key of David” in the context of the Apostolic Mission committed to Peter [cf. Mt 16:18, ff.] and to the Apostles [cf. Jn 20:21, f.]. Jesus is the way to understand the Scriptures, and His Personal Mission is one of Mercy and Forgiveness ¹⁴⁷. The “open door” to Philadelphia also can indicate its privileged situation as an avenue of approach for Missionary work - and, on a higher level, the possibility of openness into a mystical level ¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴³St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 66, a. 3, ad 3 um.

¹⁴⁴cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to John*. Vol. 2, New York: Seabury Press. A Crossroad Book 1980, pp. 288, ff.

¹⁴⁵cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John, I - XII*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NT: Doubleday and Co. 1966, pp. 393-395.

¹⁴⁶cf. G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, the Divine*. London: Adam & Charles Black 1977, pp. 51, ff.

¹⁴⁷cf. J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*. - The Anchor Bible Vol. 38. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1975, pp. 414, f.

¹⁴⁸John Sweet, *revelation*. SCM Pelican Commentaries. London: SCM Press Ltd. 1979, pp. 101, f.

c. Again, in the Letter to Laodicea - accused of lukewarmness - the recipient is invited to open the Door on hearing the Lord, so that He might come in and share the meal [cf. Rv. 3:20]. This passage would almost have one think of the Last Supper, and the Eucharist in general. In this imagery, an intimate coming of the Lord is promised ¹⁴⁹:

- there is implied a kind of judgment - His coming asks for conversion;
- this is the Bridegroom of the parables where the Lord has the servants sit at table [cf. Lk 12:35, ff.]; or, the story of the wise and foolish virgins [cf. Mt 25:1, ff.].
- it is a passage based on the Spouse of the Song of Songs [cf. Ct 5:2] - this is the Lord seeking His “own” ¹⁵⁰.

d. As this is the last of the seven prophecies, and the imagery of the “door” is near the end, it seems to pertain to the concluding segment of this part of the message.

e. This same image is used a few verses further on in the opening of the Prophetic Visions, in the Prelude of the “Great Day.” Here, the Lord is committing the world to His Lamb. The Seer sees a door open in the heavens [cf. Rv 4:1]. This door opens right into heaven.

f. A number of the Fathers saw the Wound in the side of Christ as “the Door of Salvation”:

1.] St. Augustine:

a.] In his Commentary on John, the Saint states that the side of Jesus was “opened” - as though, in some way, there was thereby opened the gate to life. From this opening flowed the Sacraments of the Church, without which one does not enter into true life. St. Augustine then compares this opening in the side of Christ to the door that Noah made on the side of his ark, through which would enter all who would be saved from perishing ¹⁵¹.

b.] For Augustine, it was “certain” that the Ark of Noah had a door in the side to signify that wound in the side of Christ pierced with a lance. It is through this wound in the side of Christ that those who would believe in Him, initiated in the Sacraments that flow therefrom, would enter. In his Letter against

¹⁴⁹cf. G.B. Caird, *Revelation of St. John*, ib., pp. 57, f.

¹⁵⁰cf. John Sweet, *Revelation*, pp.106, 109.

¹⁵¹St. Augustine, *In Jn. Evang.*, CXX, 2 - PL 35,1953.

Faustus, Augustine repeats this idea one would remove the veil from the opened side of Noah's Ark, and the one would find the Wound of Christ from which flowed the sacraments of the Church ¹⁵².

2.] St. Avitus taught that one should not merely see the Wound of Christ, but much more look at it as the entrance way to salvation. The Spouse of the Second Adam is taken from His side in sleep. We receive the water from His side, while the martyrs receive His Blood. The Lord vests them in the precious purple of His Blood, and asperges us in the whitened waves of Baptism ¹⁵³.

3.] St. Bede, the "Venerable": it is "without doubt" that the door in the side of the Ark designates that gate which had been broken open by the lance of the soldier. By means of the Sacraments that flowed out from it, believers are received into the society of the Holy Church, as into the Ark ¹⁵⁴. The Venerable Bede also wrote in his reflections on the Temple of Solomon that a soldier had "opened" the door to the wounded side. Through this, there is broken open for us access to the heavenly realities ¹⁵⁵. In his reflections on the Prophets, Esdras and Nehemiah, Bede wrote that the Lord and Savior had chosen to open for us all a gate of salvation in the right side of His Body. Once we are washed and sanctified by the Sacraments of His side, we can enter into the most sublime court of the heavenly kingdom. It is through the Gate of His side that we ascend to the upper Cenacle. Consecrated by the water of Baptism and the Chalice of the Lord, we proceed from earthly conversation to the heavenly life ¹⁵⁶.

f. St. Thomas Aquinas: in his Commentary on John's Gospel, the Angelic Doctor shows that he was clearly the heir to this long and rich tradition of the Fathers and early Church writers. He writes that it is significant that the text states, "He opened": because through this wounded side, there has been opened for us the gate to eternal life [cf. Rv 4:1]. This is the Gate situated on the side of the Ark. But, this Gate is the cause of our salvation. The Blood and water flowing from the side of Christ were meant to show that through the Passion of Jesus there has been communicated a full purification ¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵²St. Augustine, *Contra Faust. Manich. bk XII*, 20 - PL 42, 275.

¹⁵³St. Avitus, *Sermo* - PL 59, 312.

¹⁵⁴St. Bede, *Hexam. II* - PL 91, 90.

¹⁵⁵St. Bede, *De Templo Salomonis*, 8 - PL 91, 753.

¹⁵⁶St. Bede, *In Esd. et Nehem., Prophet., alleg ex. Bk I, II, 7* - PL, 91, 854.

¹⁵⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Evang. Jo., Caput XIX, lectio V, n. 4*.

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B.] Reflections from the Magisterium

As has been pointed out in a doctoral thesis ¹⁵⁸, the modern Magisterium in particular has shown an increasing interest in the Wound in the Side - culminating in the two Vatican Council texts [cf. LG 3; SC 5]. A rapid survey of these texts will show that the Magisterium has been an apt student of the Fathers and classical theology - offering some development on this rich thought.

1. The Ecumenical Council of Vienne. The Constitution, *Fidei Catholicae*, [May 1312]:

a. For the first and only time [until Vatican II], a Council of the Church treated specifically with the Wound in the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ. This Council was concerned with some of the “Spiritualist” manifestations in the Church - and in particular, with one Peter John Olivi, Franciscan, who held that Christ was not yet dead when pierced with the lance ¹⁵⁹.

b. The Document states that the Word of God chose not only to be nailed to the Cross but also to die upon it. He had already given up His Spirit when He sustained the wound with which His side was pierced. From this wound there flowed “water and blood” - the Council document does not follow the order of Jn 19:34, but rather that of 1 Jn 5:6, ff. There was thus formed from the side of the sleeping Christ, His Spouse, the Church. Quoting Paul [cf. Rm 5:15], who states that the First Adam is a prefigure of the One to come, the Council shows this mystery fulfilling the episode of the formation of Eve from the side of Adam. The Council document speaks of the fact of this “Sacrament” - used in the broad sense, meaning the exterior reality which here reveals a deeper interior truth. This is no explicit reference here of the sacraments flowing from the side of Christ.

¹⁵⁸Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background*. Dissertation. Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana 1980, pp. 319-337.

¹⁵⁹cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzter, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Roma: Herder 1975. Editio xxxvi, p. 283. *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*. Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose 1973. pp. 333-401, especially pp. 360, ff. [cf. D-S # 901].

c. There is, then, in this Decree the ecclesiological and spousal interpretation of the wounded side of Christ, but not the “sacramental”, in the formal sense.

2. Pope Pius X: in two documents speaks of the wounded side of Jesus Christ:

a. **Lucunda Sane:** Encyclical on Pope Gregory, the Great, dated March 12, 1904 ¹⁶⁰. The Holy father traced the life story of Gregory on the 13th centenary of his death. The Pontiff showed that the promises which inspired Gregory were still alive in his 13th centenary: kingdoms, once powerful peoples, and great nations have come and gone. The Church remains, united indissolubly with her Heavenly Spouse, with the same strength that she had when she came forth “from the pierced heart of Christ” dead on the Cross ¹⁶¹. The Holy Father here unites the Church, as Spouse, and the Pierced Heart of Jesus Christ. There is, then, the spousal and ecclesiological imagery.

b. **In Mulieri Forti:** a document from the Sacred Congregation of Rites. This is dated in 1910, and made known the decision of the appointing a Commission to further the Canonization process of the then Blessed Magdalen Sofia Barat. The Church is described as “The Valiant Woman” [cf. Si 26:2], having come forth from “the most sacred side and heart of Christ” ¹⁶². The imagery used by the Pope is ecclesiological, spousal, virginal and maternal.

3. Pope Benedict XV: decreed that the Beatification of the African Martyrs, Charles Lwanga and Companions, should proceed, by a document entitled ***Sancta Mater Ecclesia***, April 3, 1920 ¹⁶³. In the course of this Decree, it was stated that the Church had hardly come forth from the Side of Christ that she found the means of development, even in the midst of terrible persecution. While there is the ecclesiological imagery here, there is no mention of the Spousal theme, nor the fact that the side of Christ was indeed wounded.

4. Pope Pius XI: in a similar document, the Apostolic Letter of July 5, 1925, declared the Beatification of the Korean Martyrs who had died for their faith during seven years of frightful persecution, 1839-1846. The title of this letter was ***E Latere***

¹⁶⁰*The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939*. edited by Claudia Carlen, IHM. Raleigh: McGrath Publishing Co. A Consortium Book 1981, pp. 19-28

¹⁶¹ib., # 8, p. 21.

¹⁶²*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 2 [1910], pp. 683, ff.

¹⁶³cf. AAS 12 [1920], pp. 168-170.

Christi ¹⁶⁴. The Church is presented as coming forth from the side of Christ, and this reveals the fact of her divine beginnings from the continuing miracle of Martyrdom, active charity. Here there is only the ecclesiological imagery - no sacramental, spousal, indication - nor, the blood and water, or the “piercing”, the wounding of Christ’s side.

5. **Pope Pius XII:** in three major documents of his Pontificate the Pontiff spoke of the Wounded Side of Jesus Christ:

a. **Mystic Corporis:** [June 29, 1943] ¹⁶⁵ was a profound doctrinal expose’ on the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. In the conclusion of this lengthy document, the Holy Father dedicated a number of paragraphs to the Virgin Mother of God. As Queen of Martyrs, more than anyone else, she filled up for those things wanting of the sufferings of Christ [cf. Col 1:24], for the Church. As she cared for Christ in the Crib, today she still cares for the Church, “the Mystical Body of Christ, born of the pierced heart of the Savior”, quoting the Vespers Hymn for the Office of the Sacred Heart ¹⁶⁶.

b. **Mediator Dei** [November 20, 1947] ¹⁶⁷ was a profound reflection on the Sacred Liturgy. In the course of this most important document, the Holy Father states that on the Cross, “lifted” up between heaven and earth, the saving sacrifice of His life is offered. The sacraments that will impart the riches of redemption to humanity are poured forth “from His Pierced Heart” ¹⁶⁸. The Pontiff does not seem to specify which of the “Sacraments”, but simply states that they are to impart the treasures of salvation into humanity.

c. **Haurietis Aquas** [May 15, 1956] - of all the documents of Pope Pius XII, this makes the most abundant use of the symbolism of the Pierced Side of Jesus Christ ¹⁶⁹. Making abundant use of biblical imagery, and explicitly, to the Pierced Side of Jesus Christ. Those who heard Him speaking on the Festival of Tabernacles [cf. Jn 7:37, ff.] could have easily recalled the ancient prophecies of Isaiah [12:3], Ezechiel [47:1-12] and Zechariah [13:1], promising the Messianic times. They might also have

¹⁶⁴cf. AAS 17 [1925], pp. 366-369.

¹⁶⁵*The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958*, edited by Claudia Carlen IHM. Raleigh: The McGrath Publishing Co. A Consortium Book 1981, pp.31-63.

¹⁶⁶ib., # 110, p. 60.

¹⁶⁷ib., pp. 119-154,

¹⁶⁸ib., # 17, p. 122.

¹⁶⁹ib., pp. 291-313.

remembered the story of the water gushing from the stone [cf. Ex 17:1, ff.; Nb 20:7, ff.; 1 Co 10:4; Rv 7:17; 22:1] ¹⁷⁰.

1.] Pius XII developed the idea of the Mystical Marriage of the Savior and the Church ¹⁷¹. He also explicitly develops the birth of the Church from “the wounded heart of the redeemer.” And from this same heart, the Sacraments also flowed ¹⁷².

2.] The Pontiff reasoned that the lance must have reached the Heart of Christ, as it was proof of His death. This wounded heart is a living image of the Divine Love, sending His only-begotten, most beloved Son for the Redemption of the world ¹⁷³, and Christ’s love for humanity. The wounds in His hands and feet and side remain as the glowing marks of His three-fold victory over Satan, sin and death ¹⁷⁴.

3.] The Pontiff refers further to the Wounds of Christ in that, with Mary, the Apostles and the fathers of the Church, the Church has always had believers totally dedicated to God. Such persons adored, thanked and loved Jesus’ human nature, especially His wounds ¹⁷⁵. The Apostle Thomas went from a doubter to a believer, through his profession of faith, adoration and love, that arose from the wounded Christ to His divine nature ¹⁷⁶. While devotion to the sacred Heart as such developed only gradually in the Church, many believers were strongly inspired by the wounded heart of Christ to venerate His infinite love.

6. The IInd Vatican Council used the imagery twice, in an “ecclesiological” sense. The Church was inaugurated and has grown through the power of God. This is symbolized by the blood and water that flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus [cf. Jn 19:34; cf. LG 3]. “For it was from the side of Christ, as He slept the sleep of death upon the Cross, that there came forth the wondrous sacrament which is the whole Church” [cf. SC 5].

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¹⁷⁰ib., # 3, p. 291.

¹⁷¹ib., # 89, pp. 301, ff.; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Supplem. q. 42, a. 1, ad 3 um.

¹⁷²ib., # 90, p. 302.

¹⁷³ib., ## 91, 92, pp. 302.

¹⁷⁴ib., # 93, p. 302.

¹⁷⁵ib., # 112, p. 304.

¹⁷⁶ib., # 113, p. 304.

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C. Reflections from Byzantine Liturgy

It is of great interest to note that there is a particularly Eastern contemplation of the Wound in the side of the resurrected Jesus Christ. Along with the sorrowful wound of Good Friday, the Byzantine Liturgy reflects abundantly on “the wound in the side, in the New Life” ¹⁷⁷. A number of themes are celebrated in these Byzantine Prayers:

1. **The Biblical Themes:** a reflection on Christ’s resurrection and appearance to the Apostles manifesting the “Glorious Stigmata of the Resurrection” to them, shows that this confirmed their faith, instilled joy, and diffused peace. The Church prays that eight days after the Resurrection that the Lord appeared. He showed His hands and His side, and even the doubting disciple came to believe ¹⁷⁸. The Stigmata of Easter was a source of much Peace ¹⁷⁹. This extraordinary even asks for the praise of the Church ¹⁸⁰ and this wonder must be professed ¹⁸¹.
2. **Symbols:** water and fire predominate. The “most pure Blood” and the “Glorious water” offer a source of eternal life ¹⁸². These renew the face of the earth ¹⁸³. The open side is a transforming fire - the encounter with it brings a change, deep within the believer ¹⁸⁴.
3. **Trinity and the “Call”:** the manifestation of the wounded side shows, through faith, the union of the two natures to the doubting disciple ¹⁸⁵. This wonder showed the Resurrection ¹⁸⁶. The contemplation of this Mystery will seal one with the fervor

¹⁷⁷cf. Joseph Ledit, SJ, *La Plaie du Cote*. Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum 1970, pp. 153-173.

¹⁷⁸ib., # 216, p. 156; #228, p. 160; # 233, p. 161; # 240, p. 163; # 247, p. 165.

¹⁷⁹ib., # 214, p. 156.

¹⁸⁰ib., #237, p. 163; # 250, p. 167; # 252, p. 168; # 255, p. 169; # 258, p. 170.

¹⁸¹ib., #220, p. 158; # 231, p. 161.

¹⁸²ib., # 254, p.. 168.

¹⁸³ib., #260, p. 171; # 261, p. 172.

¹⁸⁴ib., # 224, p. 159; # 232, p. 161; # 235, p. 162; # 238, p. 163; # 242, p. 164.

¹⁸⁵ib., # 236, p. 162.

¹⁸⁶ib., # 245, p. 164.

of the Spirit ¹⁸⁷. This is the true Wisdom ¹⁸⁸; this is a Mystery that asks more than a cursory glance, but begs contemplation ¹⁸⁹.

4. An Invitation to Conversion: To those behind the closed doors, the Lord shows His opened wounds - He is the same Who died on the Cross ¹⁹⁰. This encounter will lead to conversion.

5. The Stigmata is a Gift: The coming of the Risen One bestows profound benefits on those who meet Him ¹⁹¹. The wounded Christ brings the gift of His healing, ¹⁹² which implies new life ¹⁹³.

6. This Encounter with Mercy inspires Hope: these are the central aspects in the prayers that take their inspiration from the wounded side of Christ: contact with the Wounded Christ shows Him clearly to be the Merciful One ¹⁹⁴. Glory and Praise should be extended to the Divine Mercy in this Mystery ¹⁹⁵. Mercy is the reason why the Lord endured His Agony ¹⁹⁶. This is the source of sublime hope for the worshipper ¹⁹⁷.

7. The Mission of the Stigmata: once the believer has encountered the Risen Lord, the mandate is to announce in faith the Resurrection from the dead ¹⁹⁸. After contact with the wounded side of the Lord, the faithful are called to profess Him as the Lord and God and to share the Good News of the Risen Lord ¹⁹⁹.

¹⁸⁷ib., # 259, p. 170.

¹⁸⁸ib., # 230, p. 161.

¹⁸⁹ib., # 234, p. 162.

¹⁹⁰ib., # 26, 227, p. 160.

¹⁹¹ib., # 218, p. 157; # 251, pp., 167, ff.

¹⁹²ib., # 219, p. 157; # 262, p. 172; # 265, p. 173.

¹⁹³ib., # 248, p. 165; # 256, pp. 169, f.; # 264, pp. 172, f.

¹⁹⁴ib., # 221, p. 158; #229, p. 160; # 244, p. 164.

¹⁹⁵ib., # 257, p. 170; # 262, p. 172.

¹⁹⁶ib., # 243, p. 164; # 246, p. 165.

¹⁹⁷ib., # 215, p. 156.

¹⁹⁸ib., # 222, p. 158.

¹⁹⁹ib., # 223, pp. 158, ff.

Conclusion: Reflections from Modern Theology ²⁰⁰

[1] Pope Leo XIII had referred to the stages in the Birth of the Church in his Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Divinum Illud Munus*, [May 9, 1897. A careful reading of one of the Pontiff's statements sows at least a three-fold stage of the "birth" of the Church ²⁰¹:

...The Church, which already conceived, came forth from the side of the Second Adam in His sleep on the Cross, first showed herself before the eyes on the great day of Pentecost... ²⁰².

[2] Monsignor Mejia indicates how Pope Pius X, in his Encyclical, *Ad Diem Illum* [February 2, 1904] shows that the Church was conceived in Mary with Christ: "... she carried all those whose life was contained in the life of the Savior..." ²⁰³. Pope John Paul II has made a similar statement in his Homily in Ephesus, December 7, 1980. Mary is indeed "the Mother of the Church."

[3] Paradoxically, then, the Church is born with the Death of Jesus. The "birth" of Pentecost is the showing of the Church in an outstanding manner, in a public way. Thus, the Church is truly born of the side of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

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²⁰⁰cf. Sebastian Tromp, SJ, "De Nativitate Ecclesiae", in: *Gregorianum* 13 [1932], pp. 489, ff.; cf. Edward Malatesta, SJ, "Blood and Water from the Pierced Side of Christ", in: *Segni e sacramenti*. pp.165,ff.; Msgr. Jorge Mejia, in: *Le Coeur de Jesus ,Coeur du monde*. Paris: FAC Edidtions 1982, pp. 85-101.

²⁰¹cf. Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ...* Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana. Disertatio. 1980, pp. 289-295, passim.

²⁰²cf. *The Papal Encyclicals 1878-1903*. edited by Claudia Carlen, IHM. Raleigh: McGrath Publishing Co. A Consortium Book 1981., n.5, p. 412.

²⁰³cf. ib., *The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939*, ib., # 8, p.13.