

THE STIGMATA OF JESUS CHRIST

Biblical & Theological Reflections



[Diego Velasquez]

Let us look on the One we have pierced ...
[cf, Zc 12:10, 14; Jn 19:37; Rv 1:7]

Vol. I:
SPRING-TIME FEAST OF THE IMMOLATED LAMB, BLOOD

Vol. II:
AN AUTUMNAL LITURGY OF WATER

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2008

... Here we have an anchor for our soul ... Reaching right through, beyond the veil ... beyond the Second Veil, called the Holy of Holies ... a living opening through the Curtain, that is, His Body ...[cf. Heb 6:19; 9:3; 10:20]

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1312: ...If you wish to see me, look for me in the wound of the side of Christ. For it is there that I dwell; and here it will be easy to find me. You will search in vain in any other place.

[St. Gaspar Bertoni - For 'Low' Sunday, April 5, 1807 - Verona, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio].

1771: *His side, opened after His death, is used to show us that Heart, that same Heart wounded by the lance, that **WOUND RETAINED IN HIS GLORIOUS BODY**, render the Heart so sweet, evident, divine, so much so that it is impossible to venerate **the Wounded Heart without remembering and venerating His immense love*** [St. Gaspar Bertoni, Stigmatine Founder - Sermon on Sacred Heart]

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Preface

Twice Vatican Council II spoke of the Church being “**born from the side of Christ**” (cf. **LG 3; SC 5**). These two texts seem to have been the culmination of a long interest in papal documents, particularly of the recent Magisterium, concerning the Wounded Side of Christ.¹

In one of his great encyclicals, Pope Pius XII commented on **the Wounded Side** in connection with the love of Jesus for God the Father² - and for all of the adopted sons and daughters of God. The **Wounded Sacred Side** is a remarkable revelation – in both word and deed – bringing the believer to an ever deeper response and trust in the mercy of God.

These biblical reflections are an attempt to meditate on the mystery of the **mercy of God** from the perspective of the Wounded Side of Christ. Basically, these reflections will be “biblical”, and the attempt is made here to sound the depths of the charism of the Community called the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ – of which I am a member. The titular feast of this Congregation is the Friday after the 11nd Sunday of Easter, where the Church reflects on the Sorrowful Wounds inflicted on Good Friday [cf. **Jn 19: 17, ff., 33,ff**] – then, on the sending of the Apostles in this context: the Lord sends his Apostles, after sharing with them the peace and joy of His resurrection. In showing His hands and His side, He sends His chosen ones on the Apostolic Mission of forgiveness and mercy. Jesus sends, just as the Father sends Him (cfr **Jn 20:19, ff.**)

It is this mystery, in connection with the Wounded Side of Christ, that will be the content of this course: a mystery pondered.

Rev. Joseph Henchey, C.S.S.

¹ cfr. The published doctoral thesis: Martin L. Smith, **Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background**. Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana. Doctoral Dissertation. Rome 1980.

² cfr. Rafael Criado, SJ. “Los Simbolos del Amor divino en el Antigo Testamento”, in **Cor Jesus: Commentationes in Litteras Encyclicas ‘Haurietis Aquas’**, Vol. I, Pars Theologica. Rome: Herder 1959, pp. 413-460.

FOREWORD

You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink. (cf. Ex 17:6)

**See now, he is the God of my salvation, I have trust and no fear, for Yahweh is my strength, my song, he is my salvation.
And you will draw water joyfully from the Springs of salvation (cf Is 12:2, f.)**

They were all baptized into Moses in this cloud and in this sea: and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them as they went, and that rock was Christ (cf 1 Co 10:2, ff.)

**On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood there and cried out:
If any man is thirsty, let him come to me!
Let the man come and drink who believes in me!
As Scriptures says; "From his breast shall flow fountains of living water." (cf Jn 7:37, ff.)**

When they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water . . ." (cf Jn 19:33, f.).

Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you' and showed them His hands and His feet...As the father sent Me, so am I sending you...Put your finger here, here are My hands. Give Me your hand; put it into My side. Doubt no longer, but believe...My Lord and my God! [cf. Jn 20: 19, ff.]

... everyone will see Him, even though who have pierced Him ... [Rv 1:7].

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PRESENTATION:**A CONTEMPLATION CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST*****Looking on Jesus ... think diligently on Him...!*** [Heb 12]

Faith, in effect, inspires the believer to measure authentically the respective values of the two worlds: earthly and heavenly, apparent and invisible, and to decide consequently which of the two to choose. Thus, the Faithful see the Day of Judgment approaching [cf. 10:25]. They are convinced that God does exist, and that He will reward eternally those who seek Him [cf. 11:6]. The spiritual world is open only to those whose eyes are purified [cf. 12:14 – the ‘pure of heart’ will see God! [cf. Mt 5: 8]. They can call on new energies in this certitude.

However, the central object of Christian contemplation is the very Person of Jesus Christ. Faith shows Him all enveloped, transfigured in splendor [cf. Heb 2:9]. Faith also contemplates Him in His abysmal abasements and abject suffering [cf. Heb 12:3]. Faith rivets its contemplative gaze on the Great High Priest of Mercy in the New Liturgy of Heaven [cf. 3:1] – He is prayerfully pondered as the source and the perfection of the faith [cf. Heb 12:2].

[1] Contemplation of Jesus Christ in Hebrews [St. Thomas]

St. Thomas Aquinas offers a beautiful meditation here on: **Looking on Jesus:**³ Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of the Faith. If you wish to be saved, you have to ponder His example. Thus, it is said: **Contemplating the Jesus in His suffering.**

662:When the author says: ***Looking on Jesus,*** etc., he posits the example of Christ. He does two things regarding this: first, he shows why the Passion of Christ is to be held as an example, and what in it is to be considered; second, he shows the fruit of this connection when he says: ***For, think diligently on Him.***

663: For just as Ep 2:8 states: ***By grace, you are saved through faith,*** and Christ is the Author of Faith. If you wish to be saved you ought to look upon Him as the Exemplar. ***Looking on Jesus*** who has suffered.

This is in connection with the biblical story [cf. Nb 21] where the bronze serpent is held up as a sign, and all those gazing upon it were cured. And just as Moses held the bronze serpent up in the desert, so it was necessary for the Son of Man to be raised up so that anyone who believes in Him will not perish, and but will have eternal life [cf. Jn 3]. If you wish to be saved, then, contemplate the face of your Christ.

664: He is the author of faith in two ways: first, by **teaching** the faith in words. Above Heb 1:2: ***Has spoken to us by His Son.*** Jn 1:18: ***The only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*** Second, by **impressing faith in our hearts.** Ph 1:29: ***For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him,*** etc.

³ In Heb. 12.

Likewise, He is the Perfecter, Finisher of Faith in two ways: In one way, by confirming it with miracles. Jn 10:38: **Though you will not believe Me, believe the works.** In the other way, by rewarding faith. For since faith is imperfect knowledge, its reward consists in the perfection of that Knowledge. Jn 14:21 **...I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.** This was signified in Zc 4:9, where it is said: **The hands of Zorobabel have laid the foundations of this house,** namely, the Church, whose foundation is faith, **and His hands will finish it.** For the hands of Christ, who descended from the line of Zorobabel, founded the Church in faith and consummates that faith with glory. **For we see now through a glass in a dark manner; but, then, face to face,** as it says in 1 Co 13:12. Augustine says in *On the Trinity* [1:10]: 'Contemplation is the reward of faith, for which reward hearts are cleansed by faith, as it is written, **Cleansing their hearts by faith.**

665: In the Passion of Christ, these three matters are to be considered:

- first, what He rejected: [**gaudium terrenum**]
- second what He sustained: [**crucem**];
- third what He merited: [**sessionem ad dexteram Patris**].

Regarding the first, the text says: **having joy set before Him;** but that joy was the earthly joy by which he was sought by the crowd who He feared wanted to make Him King, which he contemned by fleeing onto the mountain, as is told in Jn 6:15. Hence it says in Sirach 2:2, *Laughter I counted as error: and to mirth I said: Why are you deceived?* Or, this was the joy of eternal life, given as a reward.

He endured the Cross, and this is the second thing, namely what He endured. Ph 2:8: **He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.** In this is shown also the bitterness of the Crucified, since there he was affixed by his hands and His feet, and the vileness and the ignominy of this death, for this was the most ignominious kind of death. Ws s:20: **Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death.**

Regarding the third, namely what He merited, this was to sit at the right hand of the Father; wherefore the author says, **now sits on the right hand of the throne of God.** For the exaltation of the humanity of Christ was the reward of His Passion. Above, 1:3: **He sits at the right hand of the majesty on high.**

666: Then when the author says: **For think diligently on Him,** it shows what is the fruit of this consideration. First the author encourages a diligent consideration of the example; second, he shows the profit of it when he says, **that you be not wearied;** third, he gives the reason when he says: **for you have not yet resisted.**

667: He says then: As has been said, **Looking on Jesus,** etc., not only this, but also **think diligently on Him,** that is, think again. Pr 3:6: **In all your ways, think on Him.**

And the reason for this is that in whatever tribulation the remedy is found in the Cross:

- For there is obedience to God. Ph 2:8: **He humbled Himself, becoming obedient.**

- Likewise there on the Cross is the affection of piety to one's parents, for there He took care of His Mother.

- Again, there is charity for one's neighbor, for there He prayed for His transgressors. Lk 23:34 ... ***Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*** Ep 5:2: ***And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has delivered Himself up for us.***

- Again, there was patience in his adversities. Ps 38:3: ***I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things: and my sorrow was renewed.*** Is 53:7 ***He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.***

- Again, final perseverance in all things, for He persevered even unto death. Lk 23:46: ***Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.***

Hence, the example of all virtues is to be found on the Cross. Augustine says: '**The Cross was not only the gibbet of the sufferer, but was also the cathedra of the teacher.**'

668: *Think diligently upon Him that endured.* But, what is to be thought? Three things: first, the type of suffering, ***opposition***, which is affliction with words, for they said in Mt 27:40:***Vah! You that destroy the Temple of God...*** Ps 17:44: ... ***You will deliver Me from the contradictions of the people.*** Rm 10:21:***All the day long have I spread my hands to a people that believes not and contradicts me.*** Lk 2:34: ... ***And for a sign that shall be contradicted.,*** And **such opposition** that is, so grave and ignominious. Lm 1:12: ***O all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow.***

Second., by whom He suffered, since it was ***from sinners***, for whom He suffered. 1 P 3:18: ... ***Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust.***

Third, the person of the one suffering. For before His passion He suffered from the beginning of the world in His members, but then in His own Person. Wherefore the author states: ***against Himself***, [Is 46:4: ... ***I have made you, and I will bear...*** [Ps 68:5: ... ***then did I pay that which I took not away.*** 1 P 2:24: ***Who His own self bore our sins in His body, upon the tree.***

669: [cf. II-II, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1 um; q. 128, a. 1]. He shows the profit when he says: ***that you be not wearied.*** For the consideration of the Passion of Christ makes us not to fall away. Gregory says, ***If the Passion of Christ be called to memory, nothing is too difficult, nothing which may not be tolerated with equanimity***'. So, do not fall away, fatigued in spirit, from the truth of the faith. Is 40:31: ***they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*** 2 Th 3:13: ***Be not weary in well doing....***⁴

The eyes of the Faithful become more and more accustomed to searching, seeking, looking into the distance for His Second Coming [cf. 9:28].

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Translated and edited by Chrysostom Baer, O. Praem. Preface by Ralph McInerney. South Bend IN: St. Augustine's Press 2006, pp. 270-272, *passim*.

The believing way-farer is not only a pilgrim who looks ahead at his/ her route yet to be accomplished – each pilgrim is one who is invited to think in faith. Each of the Faithful is invited to fix his/ her attention on the words of God as these are laid out before us [cf. 23:1], and takes every care not to neglect any one of them [cf. 1:14; 2:1-3, 10; 5:9; 7:25; 10:28, f.; 12:25]. The believer comes to realize that heaven and earth have been created by a single word of God [cf. 11:3], as Abraham – and each and every believer is regularly charged to reflect that God 's power is more than sufficient to raise the dead, as it created the universe [cf. 11:19]. Finally, each of the Faithful perceives that the grandeur of Melchisedech must have been an eminent person since our Father in the Faith, the central Patriarch offered him his own sacrificial tithing [cf. 7:4], and he contributed to a grasp of the future priesthood of Jesus Christ.

In brief, the secret of success along the dangerous, life-long and demanding pilgrimage from this earth to heaven rest is the theological culture [cf. 5:11: ***there are many things yet to say, and they are difficult to explain because you have grown so slow at understanding ... !***] Mere children are incapable of this sublime challenge, only the adults, those who are preparing themselves along their pilgrim journey can have the doctrinal perspicacity that would be sufficient to ponder over the Creed that is both proclaimed and prayed, with an eye to living it. It would serve no purpose merely to rattle it off, word by word [cf. 1:12: ***... all will vanish, you will roll them up like a cloth...***]. For those minds and hearts that are somewhat developing, progressing in the truth, in their grasp of Jesus Christ and His message can assure the development of their living of the faith. One needs only to consent to this aspect of the life-long development in order to reach the goal [cf. 6:1: ***... Let us leave behind us, then, all the elementary teaching about Christ and concentrate on its completion, without going over the fundamental doctrines again...***].

Concretely, this implies the intense effort to comprehend in a vital fashion, to come to the revealed conviction that **this present world is that of shadows and figures**, that **only the celestial realities are consistent and valuable**, that Jesus Christ the Great High Priest of Mercy actually officiates at the Liturgy of Life with full efficaciousness in the divine sanctuary in behalf of men of good will. Hebrews seems to show **a tenderness for sinners of weakness** [cf. 5:2], but **little patience for the hard of heart** [cf. 3:8 ff.; 10:27]. The author insists on the responsibility of each human being who is called to respond in faith to God's Word, and to correspond to the celestial gift by a persevering fidelity. Each person has the God-given power to desist – but this may also be rejected. The faithful at Baptism are flooded with gifts, but throughout life each is offered gifts beyond number – the unfaithful are destined for condemnation, to the eternal fire [cf. 6:7-8; 10:27]. These certainties of the faith, are then vivified by religious speculation, and serve as an intensification of the faith and its more perfect expression. But these, too, guarantee the faith in its integrity [cf. 13:9]. These certainties are the beset remedy against laziness and all moral weakening, the source of all **perseverance**. This is the required virtue of the way-farers and combatants. [cf. 10:32-36; 12:1-3, 7].

This is the description of the Christian perfectly equipped for the ambitious migration, and consecrated, purified in order to be able to present Himself before God [cf. 13:21 - ... ***I pray that the God of Peace ...may make you ready to do His will in any kind of good action; and to turn us all into whatever is acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen!*** The unknown Author of this Document could not conclude his Document with a phrase that would be any the more dense and more evocative, in all his teaching. His hope here is that each in the Liturgical Procession of Life might be adapted in such a way that each one will carry out the task assigned - this is a **Prayer for Perfection: ... this is how the person who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work ...** [2 Tm 3:17].

The Perfect Pedagogue [cf. Heb 12:5, ff.] is the Great God of Peace – He is One who knows how to reconcile sinners, renders them apt for all good, capable of pleasing Him. For this purpose, He has sent His own Personal, Divine **Apostle** [cf. 3:1: ... ***That is why all of you who are holy brothers [and sisters] and have had the same heavenly call should turn your minds to Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest.***]. These spiritual emigrants, will one day reach the divine repose – the purified sinners will render praise to God in a cult that is very holy and they will offer Him their perfected sacrifice: ***God ...made perfect through suffering, the Leader who would take them to their salvation...*** They are authentic religious and faithful, and have given proof of their moral probity [cf. 13:5], they persevere in their pursuit of holiness [cf. 13:14]. In the end, they produce fruits of justice [cf. 12:11] – they are compared to the good soil that has become fertile by the irrigation from heaven [cf. 6:7]. All of this has been acquired by Jesus Christ, the eternally and heavenly Great High Priest of Mercy.

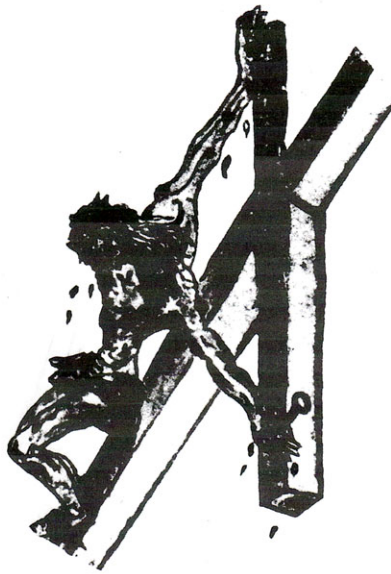
... a sword will pierce her soul ... and Mary did not understand, but treasured these things in her heart ... [cf. Lk 2: 19, 52].

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[2] Comparison of Icons



Christ Crucified
A Drawing by St. John of the Cross



Christ of St. John of the Cross
by Salvador Dali

As has been repeated so many times, Sacred Scripture does not give us a formal treatise on the Mystery of God and his love. Rather, the revealed words of God manifest this mystery in history, stories, metaphors, similes, and in so many other literary forms.

One of the key manners of revealing his mystery is through symbol,⁵ a study in itself. Through symbol, read through a long history, the mercy of God has become manifest – to the point of the paschal mystery,

“ . . . which is the summit of divine Revelation and the supreme manifestation of God’s mercy to the people of every age.”⁶

Through words and deeds, the great drama gradually became clearer, to the point that a believer might indeed wonder just who could believe what has been heard.⁷

In the manifestation of the “Pierced One”⁸ the mystery of the love of God has become clear in the outpouring of the blood and water, through the testimony of one whose witness is true, as the author of John’s gospel describes this scene⁹. Ample studies do exist concerning the “Blood” of the Pierced One¹⁰.

⁵ Cf. Avery Dulles, SJ, *Models of Revelation*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc 1983. From pp.131-154, Fr. Dulles treats of “Symbolic Revelation”; cfr. also Charles Bernard, SJ, *Le Coeur et ses symboles*. Paris: Tequi. 1981; id., *Theologie Symbolique*. Paris: Tequi.

Aiden Nichols, OP, *The Art of God Incarnate. Theology and Symbol from Genesis to the Twentieth Century*. New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press 1980.

Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology. Models of God in Religious Language*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1982.

⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Aprite Portas Redemptori*. Bull of Indication for the 1950th Anniversary of Redemption. English Translation, Vatican Polyglott Press, January 6, 1983, n.1.

⁷ Is 53:1

⁸ cfr. Zc 12:10; Jn 19:37; Rv 1:7.

⁹ Cfr. Jn 19:35.

¹⁰ *Sangue e antropologia biblica*. A cura di F. Vattoni. Roma: Edizioni Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 2 volumi 1981.

Sangue e antropologia biblica nella patristica, a cura di F. Vattoni, Roma: edizioni Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 2 volumes 1982. (A third series is in preparation).

Documenti pontifici sul culto del Preziosissimo Sangue di N.S.G.C.. Quaderni Sanguis Christi, n. 4. Roma: Edizioni Preziosissimo Sangue 1982.

P.J. Sena, C.PP.S., *A Biblical Theology of the Blood of Christ*. Carthagina, Ohio: Messenger Press 1982, pp. 43.

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 (i.e. 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” (cfr Jn 19:34; Rv 1:7), from whose side the streams of salvation flow. First it will be necessary to trace the source of this figure.



A. OT BACKGROUND

Presentation:

Texts of Zechariah: the writings of this prophet are generally divided into two parts:

- first part (Zc 1:1-8:23)
- second part (9:1-14:21)

1. It is to this Second Part that our interest is drawn because of a very unusual series of texts in the last 3 chapters. He offers 4 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 Rimmon in the plains of Megiddo 9cfr 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 (cfr 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 (cfr 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 (cfr Zc 13:7).

2. These texts are applied by the Synoptics and most especially by John as being fulfilled in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

a. **The “Pierced One”:** 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, he was killed by Neco, the Egyptian Pharaoh (cfr 2 K 23:28:30), in the year 609.

1) The Second Book of Chronicles (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 he 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 Second Book of Kings (cc 22-23:30) and the Second Book of Chronicles (cc. 34:1-35:26) 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, when there was discovered in the Temple he was renovating an unusual document. It was identified simply as “The Book of the Torah” which many authors 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 to Assyria in 722 a century earlier, he used this book as the basis of a “Covenant Renewal Ceremony.”

c) This ritual was carried out 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 be reinstituted – as this had been neglected for a long time.¹¹

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 that he ordered (cfr 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 Judah reason to fear.

f) Egypt to the south decided to join forces with Assyria to the north, in order to confront what was then 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. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians, subjugated the remaining tribes of Israel, and sent them off into captivity.¹² They would eventually be defeated by Cyrus, the Persian – the theme of the first half of Second Isaiah.

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.¹³

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 prosperity – and Josiah really was, but died anyway. The battle of Megiddo for the simple believers of the 609 before the coming of Christ, was indeed a kind of “Armageddon”, a

¹¹ cf. Bernard W. Anderson, *Understanding the OT*. 3rd edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1975, pp. 348-352, passim.

¹² cf. Joan Comay, *The Hebrew Kings*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1977, pp. 133-137, passim.

¹³ cf. John Bright, *A History of Israel*. A Revised Edition. London: SCM Press Ltd, 2nd impression 1974, pp. 315-324.

cataclysmic battle meaning the end of everything. It was just a matter of time now, when all seemed over: the Northern Kingdoms were already gone, and the death of Josiah meant the end of "Israel" as a people. Indeed, Josiah could really have been the historical background to "**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 convert people, and had set his heart on the Lord (cfr Si 49:1-4). The Deuteronomic definition of vocation is the action by which the "Lord sets His heart and chooses" one (cfr Dt 7:7). King Josiah had responded in kind.

It may be that King Josiah afforded the "historical background" for the pierced one.

b. The second image is that of a **shepherd struck by God, the wounded prophet**, followed by the (separate) oracle of the Shepherd who has been struck (cfr Zc 13:7). This verse is mentioned in the Synoptics, on Jesus' lips on the way from the room of the Last Supper, as He and the disciples made their way to the Mount of Olives (cfr Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27) and a part of the verse is found in John (cfr 16:32).

The rather unusual expression, "struck by Yahweh" (cfr Zc 13:7), is most reminiscent of the Suffering Servant, who, too, was "struck by God and brought low" (cfr Is 53:4). The "Pierced One" might also very well have been the "personified" Immolated Lamb, developed in the Book of the Apocalypse as:

- the Lamb as Paschal Lamb (Exodus)
- the Lamb as Servant (Isaiah 53)
- the Lamb as (Soteriological) Shepherd (Ezechiel)¹⁴



[1] **The Lamb as Paschal Holocaust:**

Just as the Servant (cfr 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 (cfr Ex 12).

The Lamb is already personified as "Servant" (cfr Is 53:7), and hence is an early figure of Jesus. The Lamb of the Apocalypse is remembered particularly as a Victim, a "sacrificial" Lamb. There are three major themes associated with the Blood of this 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 with hyssop onto the doorposts (cfr Ex 12:13:22, ff.). This is ideally re-presented in the Apocalypse, as the Immolated Lamb is found worthy to open the seals of the mysterious scroll because His blood purchased human beings for God (cfr Rv 5:9).

¹⁴ cf. J. Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse*. Paris: Desclee 1965, pp. 17-34.

[b] **Expiation:** the blood of the Lamb has not only “bought back” the people of God (cfr Rv 5:9; 7:14), but this same blood has also removed sin (cfr Rv 1:5). The fullest meaning of the “Immolated Lamb” (cfr 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, also had 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 sacrificed victim, and the drawing up of the Covenant of Sinai (cfr Ex 24:8), and what is being described in the Apocalypse. Moses, for example, asked the people to prepare for three days, to wash their garments (cfr Ex 19:14). And the people who have been through the “ordeal” are those who have washed their robes clean again the blood of the Lamb (cfr Rv 7:14).

2) John’s truly the “Paschal Gospel”. Jesus dies at the very moment that the Lambs are being sacrificed in the Temple (cfr Jn 18:28; 19:14, 31). Furthermore, the “compassionate” breaking of the legs of those crucified with Jesus was not carried out on Him. And John reminds his faithful that this goes all the way back to an old injunction regarding the Paschal Lamb (cfr 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 from the Book of the Covenant, Moses sprinkled them with the blood in the basin. Some had already been sprinkled on the representatives of Yahweh and Israel, indicating a Covenant of Life between the two.

4) The Apocalypse sees the eschatological events as a grandiose celebration of the Pasch and also of Tabernacles.

5) Second Isaiah’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. Deutero-Isaiah stated that “He Who pities them” (a kind of descriptive description of God) (cfr 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 united a number of OT passages when the seer announces: God’s people will never hunger or thirst again, nor will they be plagued by a scorching wind. The Immolated Lamb, now the Good Shepherd, will lead them to the sources of living water (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 (cfr Rv 7:16). This is so reminiscent of an old

prophecy found early in Isaiah, but perhaps pertaining to the times of captivity (cfr Is 25). As in the Good Shepherd (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 (cfr 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 prophets.

8) On Sinai, the Israelites were declared to be a priestly, kingly people (cfr 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 become a Kingdom of priests (cfr Rv 1:5; 5:10) – and it may be that this passage came to the author of the Apocalypse from the Trito Isaiah, promising that the new people of God will be named priests, ministers of God (cfr Is 61:6).

9) Isaiah has brought the “royal priesthood” of the People of God as the effect of the coming of the 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”, offers His life in Atonement.

[2] The Lamb as “Servant”:

[a] This theme is found in the fourth Canticle of the mysterious Suffering Servant – who offers His life in “atonement”, as a priestly personality; and serves as the new leader of God’s people, as the New King – and surely He is a prophet, thus fulfilling the three specially chosen offices of mediation of ancient Israel which failed the people of God.

[b] Very much like another prophet, Jeremiah (cfr 11:19), the Servant is led to the slaughterhouse 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 wavering flame. Rather than a bold prophet, the “Servant” is endowed with the traits of the Wisdom tradition.

[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 on the Fourth Canticle of the Suffering Servant, Isaiah 53.

[d] There is sufficient evidence that the early Church made abundant use of the Servant imagery (cfr 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 (cfr 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 (cfr Ac 8:32, ff.).

2) In the doctrinal catechesis presented in Peter's letters (cfr 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 (cfr 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 (external 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 becomes the Shepherd, leading God's People through the valley of darkness, toward the waters of repose, where the eternal table has been prepared (cfr Ps 23).

[3] The Lamb as Shepherd:

[a] The Apocalypse presents a Lamb with royal power. The animal acts very much unlike a lamb, by getting angry (Rv 6:16, f). However, he does wage a terrible combat, wins (cfr Rv 17:14). He is the Good Shepherd and Guide (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 this imagery with the Prophet Ezechiel. He had spoken of a God Shepherd (cfr Ezk 34), and that the Lord Himself would find good shepherds for His flock. He speaks of a shepherd of the line of David – which, with the end of Judah, seems to have come to an end. This Davidic Good Shepherd will be in charge of the flock, He will pasture them, and the flock will know a Covenant of Peace (cfr Ezk 34:23, ff.). Ezechiel looked forward to one fold and one Davidic shepherd (cfr 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

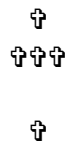
lead the thirsty flock to the streams of the living water – and God Himself will dry their tears (cfr Rv 7:17). The promise that comes again is that they will never hunger or thirst again. The Lamb in this instance takes the place of God Himself – as He functions in the Apocalypse, the way Yahweh is presented by Second Isaiah.

[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 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 (cfr Rv 7:17; 14:4) – but the Shepherd’s staff, or scepter, is mentioned often (cfr Rv 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

A very special Lamb, then, will lead the people of God to the streams of fresh water: He is the Paschal oblation; the Suffering Servant; and the Good Shepherd, Who gives up His life for the flock.

c. The third image: The eschatological stream predicted by Zechariah: this is a further image within these few verses. A fountain will be opened and this will be for sin and impurity (cfr Zc 13:1).

This mysterious eschatological fountain does not seem to have had any connection in the original writing of these oracles. Nonetheless, in John’s writing, the symbolism of Zechariah 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.



B. THEOLOGY AND THE LITURGY OF THE LAMB & the PRECIOUS BLOOD¹⁵

Presentation:

[1] It is not surprising that a writing consecrated to the Priesthood and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ would also attach a great deal of importance to the out-pouring of His Blood and its fruits of **purification, sanctification, expiation and propitiation**. However, it is remarkable – and this merits to be brought out in these reflections – that Hebrews has emphasized very much in his argumentation such an exact correspondence between the **Levitical Ritual** and the **Immolation of the Cross**. The former clearly prefigures the Cross. There are great similarities and fulfillment in the elaboration of Hebrews in presenting the role of the sacrificial blood in both the Original and the New Covenants. This comparison is one of the most clear and fruitful cases of the author's firm grasp of the OT and its function in the NT: ***Vetus in Novo patet – Novum in Vetere latet!*** All the bloody immolations of animals, in which there would be expressed the religious convictions of the ancient People of God, open out into the Sacrifice of the Cross which alone provides assured access to God.

[2] The blood of the Victims of the Old Law signified, prefigured, typified the Blood of Calvary. In the very fact that this was shed, the redemption of all the human generations past, present and future – were purchased together [cf. Jn19:34]. The way of access to the Heavenly Sanctuary is open. This led to the Church's Devotion to the Precious Blood – however, in the NT, only Peter uses that adjective [cf. 1 P 1:19; Heb without this adjective: 9:12 25; 10:29; 13:12]. Nonetheless, it is an aspect of redemption emphasized by Hebrews. This is essential to the faith [cf. Rm 3:25] – it is one of the aspects of the Mystery of Christ that will be much contemplated by the saints and mystics. One could hardly be a 'Christian' without some grasp of it.



1. **The Importance of Blood in the Semitic World:** is well known, for the ancients blood is the principle of life [cf. Dt 12:23] – it was thought of as the very 'soul' of every body [cf. Lv 17:11, 14]. It is easily understood how vital blood is for the life of the body, at least as a sign, or as an life-giving agent, a kind of condition and nourishment of this life. This association, and perhaps almost an identification in the popular mind between life and the blood could never be excessively stated in these early times. For the moment that the Ritual of Sacrifices will require usage of the blood, it will prescribe aspersions with blood, and will always keep present to the spirit this symbolism of life. It came to be thought that as blood is poured out is thought to manifest one's life, personality. Blood had its own eloquent voice, it expresses sentiments of justice and reached the very 'ears' of God [cf. Heb 12:24].

a. One of the very first dogmas of a primitive religion is that God is the exclusive Master of life and death. He alone has the right to dispose of both. There

¹⁵ C. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux...* o.c., Vol 2. Commentaire 3ieme ed. Paris: Gabalda 1953, pp. 217-284,

results from this that blood acquired a sacred character. While God in His benevolence granted to humanity the right to be nourished from the flesh of animals, there would be reserved to Him at least the blood, symbol of His sovereign domain over life. The following consequences flow from this principle:

- One could never slaughter a beast of any kind, without offering a sacrifice in oblation to God – otherwise: this blood would be imputed to the person who killed the animal, for he has shed blood and will be exiled from among the People of God. This injunction is the sons of Israel who have the practice of slaughtering their victims in the country will bring them to the priests before Yahweh, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, in order to make of them a peace offering. The priest will then pour the blood over the Altar of Yahweh at the entrance of the Tent of meeting [cf. Lv 17:4, ff.].

- It was never permissible to drink this blood: You will not eat the flesh with its soul [cf. Gn 9:4]. This would be a kind of sacrilege. This Law is so serious that the Mosaic legislator promulgated it on seven different occasions, and it is extended even to the stranger who might be dwelling in the midst of the Chosen People, and there was always the threat of a literal excommunication: Every man of the House of Israel, or among the strangers living in the midst of them, who will have consumed blood of any nature whatsoever, I will turn My Face against such a one who will have consumed blood, and I will cast him out from among My People [cf. Lv 17:10; 3:17; 7:27; 17:12-14; 19:25; Dt 12: 16, 23, f.]. The Decree of Antioch will further prescribe Christians to abstain from all foods in their blood [cf. Ac 15:20, 29; 21:25]. Only the Blood of Jesus Christ ought to be consumed by the Royal, Consecrated and Priestly People.

- hence, the enormous gravity of homicide [cf. Gn 37:22, 26], which in a number of texts is associated with idolatry [cf. Ex 22:2, 3, 6, 9, 12,, f., 27; 23:45; Pr 6:17]. The ‘murderer’, according to the biblical appellation, is a blood-letter, he sheds blood, stains his hands with blood [cf. 1 S 25:26, 31, 33; Mt 23: 30] – he is a ‘man of blood’ [cf. Ps 5:7; 9:13; 26:9; 55:24; 59:3; 79:10; Pr 6:17]. Blood cries out for vengeance [cf. 42:22; Nb 35:12; Rv 6:12] – blood cries out to God [cf. 2 M 8:3] – as did that of Abel – the first one murdered in Scripture, a fratricide [!] [cf. Gn 4:10; Heb 11:4]: these all call out for the intervention of divine justice. This is also true of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, but the language in which this is expressed is more sublime and efficacious, for it is that of expiation and of mercy [cf. Heb 12:24].

Normally, the stain of blood-shed [cf. Lm 4:14] could not be effaced unless the murderer was put to death – the blood he shed fell on his own head [cf. Jgs 9:224; 2 S 1:15; 3:29; 4:11; 16:7, f.; 1K 2: 5, 9, 23; Ps 41:16]: whoever sheds the blood of another, that man’s blood will also be shed, for God has made man to His own image [cf. Gn 9:6; 35:6] – it is to some relative in the victim’s Clan, the *go’el*, that this blood will be shed [cf. Nb 35:19, 24, 27; Dt 19:6, 10, 12; Jos 20:3, 5, 9; Ps 106: 38]. Once it has been noted that the blood that was shed was innocent blood [cf. 1 S 19:5; 25:24, 31, 33; 2 K 24:4; Is 59:7; Jr 2:34; 7:6; 19:4; 22:3, 7], God expresses His horror and refuses to pardon the culpable person. It is He Himself Who will

venge the blood of His own Servants, the Prophets and the Just, exterminated out of hatred for His holy Name [cf. Dt 33:43; 1 K 2:32; 9:7]. If, as a consequence, the apostate enters into solidarity with the executioners of the son of God, the malice of his sin is in proportion to the price of the blood of the Victim: it is simply beyond pardon [cf. Heb 6:6; 10:29-30; cf. 1 Co 11: 27].

Furthermore, the hostility of sinners against the just is the consequence of an inexcusable hatred, and this often results in the putting the just to death [cf. Mt 23:35; Lk 11: 50-51; Rv 16:6; 17:6; 18:24]. The faithful for whom Hebrews was written have not yet put up with suffering to the point of shedding their own blood [cf. Heb 12:4] - the persecutions that they are suffering at the hands of their impious enemies, must be understood that so far, these have been limited to incarcerations and deprivation of their rightful goods. But, as Christians, they have not yet had to give the supreme witness of their belonging to Jesus Christ and their fidelity to Him.

2. The Institution of the Pasch: it is in this context that the shedding of blood appears for the first time in the context of having a salvific virtue [cf. Gn 8:20, f.]. Thus Hebrews draws on this ancient tradition: *... **It was by faith that Moses kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood to prevent the Destroyer from touching any of the first-born sons of Israel ...*** [cf. 11:28]. Indeed the Lord God has prescribed that a Lamb be immolated, then that a branch of hyssop should be taken, dipped into the blood of the sacrificial animal, and then asperged on the lintels of each of the Israelites' homes. *... **The blood will serve as a sign in your favor on the houses where you are ... Yahweh will pass over to strike Egypt and on seeing the blood on the lintels and on the two uprights and the lintels, Yahweh will pass by your doors and will not permit the Exterminator to enter into your homes to strike you..*** [cf. ex 12:13-23]. This blood, it was believed both protects and saves [cf. Ex 12:27]. To be furnished with the blood of sacrificial victims puts the divine vengeance at bay – this is all a figure of the coming Immolation of Calvary and its fruits for faithful believers. They will be immunized against the attacks of Satan, who has not power over a soul that has been purified from sin, thanks to the Blood of the Lamb. As the Israelites escaped from extermination by the sprinkling of the Immolated Victims' blood, so too, the Believers of the New Covenant of Mercy will escape from the 'Second Death' in virtue of the Precious Blood [cf. Rv 12:11]. The ancient Israelite Ritual symbolized the spiritual reality that would be realized in Christianity.

3. The Covenant between Yahweh and His People: thus, the sprinkling of blood played a role in the solemn conclusion in drawing up a Covenant initiated by God Himself. Such an agreement, contract, could not be sealed in any other way than with blood [cf. Heb 9:18]. The original account of **Ex 24:6-8** is faithful recounted by Hebrews:

...that explains why the earlier Covenant needed something to be killed in order to take effect, and why, after Moses had announced all the commandments of the Law to the People, he took the calves' blood, the goats' blood and some water and with these he sprinkled the book itself and all the people, using scarlet wool and hyssop, saying as he did: This is the Blood of the Covenant that God has

laid down for you. After that, he sprinkled the tent and all the liturgical vessels with blood in the same way. In fact, according to the Law, almost everything has to be purified with blood; and if there is no shedding of blood, there is no remission... [cf. Heb 9:18, ff.].

It is in the blood of an immolated animal that the ancient religion was established, i.e., that there were confirmed and solemnized the relationships between God and His Chosen People, and their mutual contacts were consecrated [cf. Ex 29:20, f.; Lv 8:23, 24, 30]. Israel committed itself to keeping the commandments of Yahweh, and Yahweh guaranteed His assistance and His rewards to believers. And this is why **the blood is poured: half on the altar**, representing **God** – and **the other half on the People**. This is not unlike a ‘bloody cement’, or sacred seal, that united both parties; the same ‘life’ is now symbolically in both.

a. **The Mosaic Covenant** : was directed to one People, a consecrated nation, royal priesthood and did not bring with it the promises of temporal gains. However, Jesus Christ poured out His own blood, outside the gates of the City of God [cf. Heb 13:12] in order to merit forever the union of humanity with God. With this New Covenant of Mercy, the introduction of the People was not into the Promised Land of Canaan, but the Heavenly homeland. In His own Person, He served as the Mediator of a New Covenant [cf. Heb 12:24; Lk 22: 20] – and because blood is the source of life, whoever will assimilate His Blood – the only such Blood that God had commanded His People to drink in their entire history – will come to share in the very life of Jesus Christ, i.e., eternal life [cf. Jn 6:53-56; 1 Co 10:16].

The Blood of Jesus Christ is the Blood of a Covenant that is not only new but which is definitive and permanent [cf. Heb 13:20], thanks to which this then has bound and consecrated a new People, the Holy Church [cf. Ac 20:28]. This consecrated people thus enters into a perpetual communion with God [cf. Ep 2:13] By His Blood, sealing the New Covenant, the Savior reconciles and pacifies heaven and earth [cf. Col 1:20]. This is the Mystery of Faith. The Christian knows and comprehends that the love of God in his/her regard and salvation itself flows from this Blood. The faithful come to venerate this Blood in a religious manner, as the point of binding, bonding, communicating new life [cf. Heb 10:29]. St. John states that it is **the Body of Jesus Christ** was indeed that Bread which came down from heaven – Hebrews, however, **the Book of Priestly Oblation**, places its emphasis on **the Blood of the New Covenant of the Mercy of Jesus Christ** that would lead humanity to one life with God in Heaven [cf. cf. Mt 26:28; Mk14:24; 1 Co 11:25].

b. The Lord Himself had made clear that the Blood of the New Covenant was shed with a view to the remission of sins Hebrews closely dependent on the Synoptic tradition, notably in the accounts of the Passion, similarly associates the New Covenant and the Blood of Aspersions [cf. Heb 12:24], i.e., its purifying and redemptive power [cf. Heb 9:14; 13:12. this Document also exploits to good use the great theological principle formulated in Leviticus, and which then commands the entire Liturgy of sacrifices in both the OT and the NT: **‘the Blood works expiation by the Life that is in the Blood’** [cf. Lv 18:11]. Hence, the axiom: ***...In fact,***

according to the Law almost everything has to be purified with Blood; and if there is no shedding of Blood, there is no remission... [Heb 9:22].

Since the blood was thought to be the very life of the animal it could very well present the life of humanity itself, its 'very soul'. As a result if any person had truly merited to lose the one life that he/she had and which came from God, this could not be suppressed by oneself. Therefore, blood of substitute victims would be poured forth, and in some manner this was believed to wash one's soul from its sins. God Himself seemed to agree with this **substitution**, in so far as the sinner expresses authentic sentiments of repentance in and by this Sacrifice of the Victims' blood. The victim both represents and takes the place of the one culpable. The LXX emphasizes this meaning of substitution – the Blood expiates for sin in the place of the human soul. The ritual demanded that there would be designated one to offer these sacrifices, or, to pour out the victims' blood on the altar [cf. Dt 12:27; 2 Ch 29:22; 30: 16; 35:11; Ezk 23:18]. The one offering the oblation was expected to make an oblation of the fatty parts and the blood [cf. Ezk 14: 15 – both **reserved to God** because **they harbored life**]. These were the libations of Blood [cf. Ps 16:4].

c. In order to recognize the sovereign domain of God over all of creation, to express adoration and to profess one's holy abandonment to God, it is not enough for the worshipper to bring the victims to the altar [cf. Lv 14:20], but these must be consumed completely with no part set aside for later. This **holocaust** which is the most entire immolation of oneself that a creature can possibly express to God, it is therefore the most perfect sacrifice [cf. 1 S 7:9; Ex 28:21; Lv 6:15; Nb 4:6; Dt 33:10]. The custom was to slaughter a young bull [cf. Lv 1:5; 9:12], a bullock [cf. Ex 29:16; Lv 8:19], a lamb or a goat [cf. Lv 1:11], turtledoves or pigeons [cf. Lv 1:15]. The sons of Aaron would offer their blood in pouring around the altar which was set up at the entrance of the tent of Meeting [cf. Lv 1:5]. The **holocaust** was the ordinary sacrifice of Israelite worship, since both in the morning and in the evening, there was conducted the immolation of a lamb in the temple. This was to recalled the **perpetual holocaust** [cf. Ex 29: 38, ff.; Nb 28:1-8]. Its suppression took place during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, announced by Daniel, as sheer catastrophe [cf. Dt 8:11-15; 11:31; 12:11]. In the fullness of time this would be definitively supplanted by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, of which the **perpetual holocaust** was but a prefigure. St. Peter teaches that the Savior is the Lamb without blemish [cf. 1 P 1:11]. Without stain, and so the Lamb was the daily sacrifice [cf. Ex 29:38; Lv 12:6; 14:10; 23:18].

d. Therefore, the **holocaust** and the **sacrifices** of peace were offerings of adoration, gratitude and prayer – the sacrifices of expiation for sin, or debt [cf. Lv 7:1, f.] have for their purpose that of obtaining the remission of one's fault and to re-enter grace with God. Now the ritual gave here to the Blood a certain level of holiness [cf. Lv 6:27] and a privileged efficacy. It was not content in prescribing that the Blood should be spread out over the earth or the altar, but it did impose multiple aspersions. The ceremonial is identical for the reparation of sins of the great High Priest as for those of the People: the Blood had to be brought into the interior of the sanctuary [cf. Lv 10:18], and the altar had to be anointed with it. The priest having received the

anointing will take the Blood of the young bull [immolated before Yahweh], and he will carry it around the whole tent of Meeting. He will dip his finger in it, and will make seven aspersions before Yahweh, before the **Sanctuary Veil**. Furthermore, he will place some of the blood on the horns of the altar and will add to them some sweet-smelling perfumes and will pour out all the blood which remains of the young bull at the foot of the altar of Holocausts [cf. Lv 4:5, ff., 16-18; 9:8, f.]. If it is a matter of expiating the sins of a leader, or of an Israelite, an ordinary priest will immolate a bullock, or lamb, and its blood will be carried into the Holy Place, but the horns of the altar will not be anointed [cf. Lv 4:25, 30, 34]. Even the drops of blood from the two turtle-doves, or of the two young pigeons offered by the poor, will serve to sprinkle a part of the altar [cf. Lv 5:9].

e. However, keeping in mind the imperfect sentiments of those offering the Sacrifices, God did not accept such sacrifices. He had to declare through His Prophets that blood in and of itself is really nothing, and that an offering of it had value only as a symbol of the sentiments of the person; I am tired of animal sacrifices and the fatty parts of the immolated animals I do not take any pleasure in the blood of bulls [cf. Is 1:11; Ezk 44:7]. Hebrews clarifies the reason for this: there was a radical heterogeneity between material worship and a spiritual effectiveness. The immolation of an animal could indeed obtain corporal effects, ritual purity; but how could such a ritual ever purify sinful consciences? The blood of a bull or sacrificial animal is powerless to take away sin! [cf. Heb 10:4]. There is in this a condemnation of the entire sacrificial liturgy of the Former Covenant. This established powerful the need for Christ's superior intervention, the Perfect High Priest, the Perfect Victim without fault [cf. Heb 10:5-7]. This verse places on the lips of Christ Himself the declaration of Os 40:7-9, which emphasizes the spontaneous and total adherence of the victim to the Divine Will: sacrifice and oblation. You have not willed, approved. So, I say; Here I am, I am coming to do Your will, o God!

f. This incessant and useless repetition of victims beyond number of the former covenant is sharply contrasted with the unique and supremely efficacious immolation of the New Covenant of Mercy. The pouring forth of the Blood of Calvary realizes once and for the perfection of all the effects which the former liturgy tried to achieve. In the New Covenant, it is no longer the matter of the blood of unknowing animals, but rather that of a Person, not constrained in any manner, but willing to shed – not the blood of a sinner, but that of the Innocent, Only Begotten, Most Beloved son of God [cf. Heb 9:13, f.].

4. **A Victim of Expiation for the Whole World:** in order for this to be realized, the Son of God assumed His human nature – more precisely, *He participated in the blood and flesh*, as do all the descendants of Adam [cf. Heb 2:14; cf. Mt 16:17; Jn 1:13; 1 Co 15:50; Ga 1:16; Ep 5:12; Si 14:18]. If the Blood is emphasized in the formula, it is because it is to be shed in such totality in Gethsemane [cf. Lk 23:44] and on Calvary: the savior will live the life of human beings and in their service, and He will make the supreme oblation of this life on the Cross. Thus, St. John will so well call to mind the public ministry of Jesus, in that time between the Baptism and the Passion, by this suggestive formula: ***this is He Who has come through water***

and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water alone, but with the water and the blood [cf. 1 Jn 5:6].

a. He has done nothing less than to permit human beings – once the obstacle of sin has been abolished - to rejoin God, and even to approach Him [cf. Ep 2:13]. To express this entry into heaven and the divine union, thanks to the blood of Jesus Christ, Hebrews exploits the analogy of **the Ritual of expiation**, described in **Lv 16**, the **quantitative center** of the Pentateuch and its **theological apex**, referred to simply in the Talmud as **The Day , the Great Day**. Hebrews does not go in to the animal that is the emissary, and limits himself to the entrance of the Great High Priest into the Holy of Holies. The comparison is very well taken.

On the one hand, **Yom Kippur** was the most important and the most solemn of the Liturgical Ceremonial, and the great High Priest was its Celebrant. Similarly, the **sacrifice of the Cross** will be the center of the Christian Faith, and Jesus Christ will be both its **Pontiff** and **Victim**. On the other hand, all the transgressions, faults and crimes committed in the course of the year, by both the priests and the people, and which have remained stains without having understood reparation, follows because of the negligence of the sinners, both by reason of their impossibility to immolate new victims that would be efficacious on that Day of Grace. Thus, there is found symbolized the universal virtue of the **expiation of sins** by the **Blood of the Cross**. The immolation of Jesus Christ is superabundant to purify all stains: If the blood of bulls and bullocks... sanctify in procuring the purity of the flesh, how much more then, the Blood of Christ, Who, by an eternal spirit, has presented Himself without stain to God – will He not purify our conscience from dead works in order to render worship to the living God? [cf. Heb 9:13-14].

b. Vested in a white robe [as on the Transfiguration Day!], a sign of purity – the Great High Priest – for the one and only time during the entire year - would penetrate within the Holy of Holies. He had probably already immolated a bull which would serve as expiation for himself and for his people. Then, he would take a censer of gold, or one that was radiating like fiery coals taken from the altar of holocausts, and a certain container with two handfuls of finely ground incense. He would then make his way toward the Holy of Holies, push the veil aside and place the contents of the perfume jars on the coals – so that the fiery, sweet-smelling smoke would permeate the propitiatory [cf. Lv 16:13] and cover the altar of mercy. He would then step back and proceed to the expiations. He would take some of the blood of the immolated bull, re-enter the Holy of Holies, and advance towards the Ark. With his finger, he would make an aspersion of the blood on the propitiatory, with seven aspersions he would advance toward the propitiatory. [cf. Lv 16:14, f. – compare with Ex 30:10; Ezk 45: 18, f.].

c. The Sanctuary would be thus purified of the sins of the priests, the Pontiff would proceed to the expiation of the sins of the People of God. He would return to the altar of Holocausts, where he would immolate a bull, and return a third time to the Holy of Holies. Where he would repeat anew the bloody aspersions.

Finally he would end with new aspersions in the direction of the **Temple Veil**, first with the blood of the bull and then that of the goat [cf. Lv 16: 16].

d. Hebrews imitates this Liturgy! In the complex ritual, the emphasis is on the importance of the rituals regarding the Blood - in the second tent only once per year, the great high priest would enter, not without the blood which he offered for himself and for the failures of the people [cf. Heb 9:7]. The great high priest enters each year into the sanctuary with the blood [cf. Heb 9:25] – in the old law, it was always the blood of animals the blood of which was brought for sin into the sanctuary by the great high priest [cf. 13:11].

e. Hebrews insists on the superiority of the Great High Priest of the New Covenant of Mercy. ON the one hand, He enters into the genuine sanctuary with His own Blood, and not that of animals. On the other hand, He remains in the Holy of Holies forever. **Perfection has taken over for impotence.** The Christ enters once and for all into the sanctuary – not with the blood of bulls and goats – but with **His own Blood** [cf. Heb 9:12] He does not act as a mortal and sinful priest who had to satisfy also for his own sins – but Jesus Christ is the innocent Pontiff, without stain, Who belongs with full right always in the presence of God.

f. Sirach remembers Simon, a great high priest of history: he recalls a number of grandiose celebrations of ancient times:

... How splendid was the High Priest, Simon, son of Onias – with the people thronging all around him, when he emerged from the curtained shrine, like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon at the full, like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High, like the rainbow gleaming against brilliant clouds, like roses in the day of spring, like lilies by a freshet of water, like a spring of frankincense in summer-time, like fire and incense in the censer, like a vessel of beaten gold, encrusted with every kind of precious stone, like an olive tree laden with fruit, like a cypress soaring to the clouds; when he put on his splendid vestments, and clothed himself in glorious perfection, when he went up to the holy door, and filled the sanctuary precincts with his grandeur... [cf. Si 50: 5, ff.]

This majesty is only a pale comparison to the glory of the Son of God celebrating on the Cross and now in heaven the offering of His Blood for the Ransomed People of God. There is no way to measure the religious awe inspired by the Jewish high priest of old, penetrating in to the Holy of Holies of that early time – strictly observing the ritual, achieving immunity by the blood of the sacrificial animals offered in substitution - and the triumphant assurance of Jesus Christ, presenting Himself before God with His own Blood which permits Him to seek the salvation of God's special children, faithful to Him [cf. 9:25-28; 10:12-14].

g. Lastly, and very importantly, thanks to this Blood of Aspersions [cf. Heb 10: 22; Ex 24:8; 1 P 1:2], the New and Everlasting Covenant [cf. Heb 12:24], *Christ has penetrated into the Heavenly Holy of Holies with His People* [cf. Heb 9:12]. Each of the Faithful has from being part of the Life-Long Liturgical Procession on the way home, the assurance of a way of access into the Heavenly sanctuary of

the Holy of Holies by the Blood of Jesus Christ [cf. Heb 10:19]. This is what Peter calls the **Precious Blood** [cf. Heb 10:19] – which will provide all with the Faithful the right of dwelling eternally in the immediate presence of God. **The reality has taken over for what was for centuries, a type, preparation, a figure.** It is notable that the typology of the *KIPPOURIM* in Christ's instance is not at all geared to any sins of His which are non-existent, but is applied above all to the entrance into the sanctuary. If Jesus Christ and the great high priest of ancient Israel, on the one hand – and the blood of animals and the Precious Blood of the Savior on the other hand, are placed in a contrasting parallel, this is with a view to the entrance into the Holy of Holies. As access to this was both rare and very difficult in the former Ritual, and permitted solely to the Great High Priest of yore –so much the more has access to the Living God become free, without obstacles, and open for all the Faithful, thanks to this Precious Blood.

h. **Heb 9:11-14** expresses, it might be said, the *quintessence* of the entire Document. The entrance into the genuine sanctuary, the unique excellence of the Person of the Great High Priest of Mercy, the effectiveness of the Blood of Jesus Christ have all brought this about. From the opening of this special NT Document, the idea of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ was orientated toward that which the Pontiff had to offer [1:1-3]. The **superiority of the sacrifice** could also be proven by an argument, *ex communibus*, as they were once called - drawn from the priesthood itself, and drawn from this new Covenant. These are all superior realities and therefore, the **sacrifice** has to be as well. This, though, is but a general way of presenting it. In reality, the author exploits his proof with regard to **the singular nature of this sacrifice**, which is the Blood of Christ Himself. It might be said that the whole area of theology and apologetics, the *paraclesis* of Hebrews reposes in the last analysis on the **incomparable worth of the Blood of the Son of God, poured out in behalf of Believers** [cf. Heb 13:10-14].

Its instrumentality is expressed once by a grammatical construction: **...the ransom was paid in the precious blood of a Lamb without stain, namely Christ...** [1 P 1:19] - **... this is the Blood of the Covenant that God has laid down for you...** [Heb 9:21]. The Christians are all bathed in this Precious Blood – receive it in the Eucharist – are anointed with It. In the Old Covenant, this anointing remained an external ritual – but, the Blood of Christ brings New Life as it has its own power of communicating life.

5. **The Purification of the Sanctuary by the Aspersions of Blood:** as Christ was able to penetrate the Heavenly and Eternal Sanctuary as the Great High Priest, going into the Celestial, Eternal Holy of Holies, the analogy would require that the sanctuary be purified by blood. The Levitical ritual was clear on this: It is necessary on the one hand that the reproduction should in some way emulate this –

... obviously only the copies of heavenly things can be purified in this way, and he heavenly things have to be purified by a higher sort of sacrifice than this. It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modeled on the real one; but it was heaven itself so that He could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf ... [cf. Heb 9: 23, ff.].

The first effect of the aspersion of Blood is **purification**, in accord with the old Mosaic principle: **... according to the Law, almost everything has to be purified with blood, and if there is no shedding of blood, there is no remission...** [Heb 9:22]. The purification of lepers, for example, was accomplished with seven aspersions made up of a mixture of **living water and the blood** of two immolated birds: **The priest is to take the live bird, the cedar wood, the scarlet and the hyssop and he must dip all of this [including the live bird] into the blood of the bird immolated over running water...** [Lv 14:6]. The blood and the scarlet color play a role in the preparation of lustral water, used to purify the impurity derived from contact with a cadaver [cf. Nb 19:4,f.]. Hebrews notes this: **... the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer are sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement and they restore the holiness of their outward lives...** [Heb 9:13].

a. This implies that one of the essential virtues of the Blood of Christ is that of providing an efficacious **purification**. This is brought out with much emphasis by Hebrews [cf. 1:3; also 1 Jn 1:7]. However, it will be clarified that it is not a matter of the mere purification of the flesh [cf. Heb 9:10] but what is meant is that cleansing of consciences stained by sin [cf. 9:14]. This is one of **sanctification**, and this is completed by the addition of the synonym **perfection** [cf. 10:14]. Jesus Christ is the Sanctifier, *par excellence*, [cf. 2:11]. He procures that purity of soul that no ancient sacrifice could ever give [cf. 9:13; 10:2, 4], precisely because His Blood, being that of God Himself [9:14], and He alone is greater than all stains, and Whom none of them can resist [cf. 10:29; 13:12].

b. As the blood of animals is powerless to remove sins [cf. 10:4], that of the Savior obtains a **total remission** [cf. 9:22; cf. Lv 5:10, ff.] – a **definitive ransom** [cf. 9:12] that means that this blood constitutes the **Ransom Price**, but above all it **liberates from sin**. The Blood of Christ is **the instrument of the expiatory propitiation** [cf. 2:17; 9:5; Rm 3:25], reconciling humanity with God [cf. Col 2:20], and rendering their union possible [cf. Ep 2:13].

c. The Blood of Jesus Christ which ransoms, delivers and purifies souls, enables them to form a People of Kings and Priests [cf. Rv. 1:5, f.; 5:9, f.]. this **sanctification- consecration** has ultimate for its purpose that of enabling the Faithful to offer worship to the living God, *in spirit and in truth* [cf. Jn 4]. The Apocalypse will express magnificently this supreme efficaciousness of the Blood of the New Covenant: **... they have washed their robes white again in the Blood of the Lamb; they now stand in front of God's throne and serve Him day and night in His sanctuary; and the One Who sits on the throne will spread His tent over them...** [Rv 7:14, ff.].

Summary

[1] The entire Mystery of the pouring out of the Blood of the Lamb [cf. 9:22; 11:28; 1 K 18:28; Si 28:15] exposed throughout Hebrews, and which is the fruit of the contemplation on Lk 22:20. The interest which bears on the Blood of Jesus Christ is strictly theological. It is associated with the out-pouring of this Blood – i.e., this Document considers the death of Jesus as a **sacrifice**: the Savior gives His life by pouring out His life's Blood substituting for sinners. The Victim is so holy that it obtains immediately on the Faithful their return to God in grace.

[2] One would search in vain throughout Hebrews for a teaching all its own, on the Expiation – this Document simply refers back to that of the OT, using a metaphorical language, and it draws attention on the fact and on the results of Christ's sacrifice, more than on its nature and manner. The principle constantly exploited is that of **Lv 17:11: it is by the soul, or the life which is in the Blood, which brings expiation about**. Furthermore, **the more valuable the Victim, so much the more worthy is the ransom paid** or the nature of the **Covenant** itself. The former Covenant could only pour out the blood of animals in substitution, whereas **Jesus Christ has poured out His own blood – i.e., He offers His life to God**. He thus obtains an **eternal redemption**, i.e. because He is the Son of God.

[3] The value of His Blood flows from the very dignity of the Person Who freely offers It [cf. 9:12, 14]. One could note apply more exactly the Levitical axiom on **the identity of the Blood and of the Life it expresses**, nor express more clearly the transcendent effectiveness of Christ's Blood with regard to the animal sacrifices of the Old Law, and the **spiritual character** of the Savior's immolation, contrasted with the Levitical ritualism. One comes then to grasp the full force of the general presentation of Hebrews: the unique sacrifice of the New Covenant – and therefore – its cult – is better than all the sacrifices of the former Covenant. This sacrifice, in effect, is the work of the son of God incarnate, Priest and Victim. The out-pouring of His Blood, the offering of His life is powerful enough to present and to unite to God all of humanity perfected and sanctified. The Blood of Jesus Christ is the decisive factor of the **perfection** of the **New Covenant of Mercy**.

[4] This Divine Mystery is the summit, the ultimate achievement of human history for the faithful. If the preparations for it, its early beginnings, its anti-types, were defined and clarified once the goal was reached, the blood of all past immolated victims over the millennia, all take on their meaning and whatever value they had as 'types' in the manner, and in the measure that they bear some connection with the once and for all sacrifice of the Blood of Jesus Christ. In the economy of Divine pedagogy [cf. 10:9, f.] all the blood spilt in the levitical sacrifices had been destined simply to symbolize and prefigure the Blood of Jesus Christ, i.e., for **adoration, Covenant, consecration, sanctification, propitiation, purification, expiation for sin – perfection**. Because of this Blood of Christ, even sin is transfigured – and assumes the good odor of an oblation offered to God in its forgiveness. This blood which never rose above a sign in earlier times, now is the source of the genuine reformation, renewal, new life [cf. 9:10] – a truly efficacious sacrament. This is Blood

that is **pure, royal, priestly**, that of the **voluntary Victim** – and **perfect**. It was poured forth in a sovereign manner [cf. 5:7] – supremely pleasing to God. The Liturgy of the Church can only be the **sacramental oblation** of this cup of Precious Blood. Whoever drinks of this Cup will have the entrance to the Celestial and Eternal Holy of Holies opened in welcome. The commentator might conclude:

I will rejoice if, through what I have just said, leads to the increase of love and recognition of our Redeemer, Who poured out His Precious Blood for us giving Himself in utter totality. The capacity of our hearts and minds for such mysteries, as well as the challenge to our minds, cannot be amplified further than by the contemplation of this Mystery.

†††

1st EXCURSUS:
The Precious Blood of Jesus Christ
[1 P 1:18, ff.] ¹⁶

... Remember the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the Precious Blood of a Lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ ...



Presentation:

[1] The preceding v. 17, offers a glimpse into the nature of the addressees, their ontological being: *...since you invoke as father, the One who judges impartially according to each one's work, then conduct yourselves in reverential fear during the time of your alien residence...* Being within the household of God, or just being counted as 'God's People' is not an end in itself. Christians live beyond that to the Hope in the Inheritance to be revealed at the end. In the OT, this meant the 'promised land' – in 1 P, it is the **fullness of salvation**.

[2] However, the pilgrimage, the journeying, is not developed in 1 P we are all simply described metaphorically as *strangers, aliens, wayfarers*. We are on the way 'home', to the Father's House: **conduct yourselves in reverential fear during the time of your alien residence** [v. 17: other translations: Iwhile you live out the time of your exile; exile.



A. Patristic Insights

1. **1st Clement 7, 2-4:** exhorts the Corinthians of his time to bring peace and reconciliation to a divided Church. He advises his readers to abandon their empty and idle cares, that old futile way of life of yesteryear. He is convinced with the tradition that with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ there will be redemption for the Faithful. The purpose of Christ's coming was truly so that all the faith and hope of the Church would be in God.

2. **Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, III 5, 3:** the Precious Blood has redeemed us Believers from any and all deep inner rebellion. Excessive 'self-assertion' leads to a state of alienation from God by becoming subjected to sin, evil or the devil.

3. **Tertullian:** emphasizes the moral consequences of the Redemption that was achieved through Christ's Precious Blood. Through the outpouring of His Blood the spirit of incorruptibility has been infused – so that all 'consecrated' flesh becomes God's sacred property. Carnal sin is diametrically opposed to the redemption effected at such cost. Tertullian also sees the Redemption won by the Precious Blood of

¹⁶ Jacob PRASAD, *Foundations of the Christian way of Life according to 1P 1:13-25. An Exegetico-Theological Study*. Analecta Biblica 146. Rome: Biblicum 2000, pp. 259-304

Christ should lead to the freeing of any and all enslaved. Our slavery to sin is truly the loss of our freedom of Jesus Christ.

4. **Origen:** very often makes use of 1 P 1:18-19: his first image is from the world of commerce – since we have been ‘paid’ for at such a large price, we are truly indebted to Jesus Christ. The Precious Blood has been ‘paid’ for our ransom – as Lamb of God by this exchange, He takes on Himself our sins and so He suffers. He Himself is our ransom, our expiation. The unique total sacrifice of this Immaculate Lamb has rendered all the sacrifices of old ‘superfluous.’ The price Christ paid for us is so high that we do not owe any more as ransom for our slavery – but, we must live in liberty for Jesus Christ.

We have been like prisoners of war [in his commentary on Rm 3:24, f.] in this terrible spiritual combat. He tries to answer the question in Mt 16:26 – what is the Faithful to give for his/her own life? The price was far beyond anything any human being could ever have paid – but, God provided the ransom-price for us all, which was prohibitive for every person. The Precious Blood of Jesus Christ is the Price of Christian freedom [cf. 1 Co 6:20].

Christ came as the ‘Suffering Servant’: *...the son of Man came not to be served, but to serve!* [Mt 20:28] – Origen translates this as meaning that Christ has given over His entire soul for our redemption, epitomized in His Precious Blood – the principle of His Life, its very soul. He is reminded by Paul: *You are bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men!* [1 Co 7:23]. Christ had already commended His spirit to God at His death – but we have all been bought and paid for by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

In His Homily on Exodus, Origen speaks of the exorbitant Price of our Redemption as being paid to the ‘one who held humanity under the slavery of sin!’ We are all creatures of God – in being bought over by sin, each one parts from the Creator. We do belong to God because of creation – we are rightfully ‘His.’ But for our own sins, we have paid the price to the devil. Christ, though, paid a terribly price ‘to buy us back’ – He has recovered for His own Father what was rightfully His, as He made us – by paying the awful price of His own Precious Blood. The devil paid only the ‘cheap price’ of sin. [Origen held the strange view – and may have had a hand in originating the theory – that the price had to be paid to the Devil – as we ‘sold ourselves out to him’ through the cheap price of sin.]

5. **Cyril of Jerusalem:** refers to 1 P 1:19 three times in his works: he develops the flight from Egypt in Ex 14:22, ff. – the blood used on the door posts to protect the exiles is compared, as was often done with other early writers, with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. Moses was called to lead the persecuted to the Promised Land, while Jesus was sent to rescue the whole world – as blood in the OT in this story was used as a kind of ‘lucky charm’ to frighten night-time beasts, the Precious Blood of Jesus provides an inviolable sanctuary as the powers of darkness.

Cyril was convinced of the universality of Christ's Redemption through the shedding of His Precious Blood for both Jews and Gentiles. As names for Jesus Christ, Origen hints at names such as **rationality, Consciousness** - Jesus is a 'Door', a living and conscious Portal, distinguishing any who enter He is the way, leading to the Father in Heaven. He is a Sheep Whose Precious Blood cleanses the world.

6. The Cappadocian Fathers: Sts. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa [blood brothers] and Gregory Nazianzen. In commenting on Ps 33:23, Basil noted that the Lord redeems the life of His servants – none taking refuge in Him will ever be condemned, Those who were created to serve the Lord forever, were temporarily enslaved by the devil. The Lord sent His Son to free them by the shedding of His own Precious Blood. No one who will hope in Him will ever be found in sin.

Preaching on Ps 48:13-14, it is noted that all have been purchased by the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ No one can ever ransom himself as no one can pay the high price of redemption. The ransom-price of redemption is exorbitant – no one can pay it unless he/she turns away from sin. These Fathers connect this image with Is 52:3 – Jesus paid the price in His own Precious Blood.

Gregory of Nyssa makes several references to 1 P 1:18, f.: In his Commentary on Canticles. He refers to the praises of the Bride – your lips are like a scarlet thread – this is then tied in with the Precious Blood of Christ – the color scarlet refers to the mystery of the Precious Blood in which all have been redeemed

Gregory of Nazianzen refers to the Paschal Lamb the blood of which was sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of the exiles to offer a sign to the avenging Angel [cf. Ex 12:7,13] and compares this to the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God. The Lamb is slain, His acts and words are sealed with His own Precious Blood – thus sealing all the movements of mind and opinion – these can rightly be opened only by contemplation. This 'intellectual redemption;' is common among the Alexandrians: the robber has received a precious payment from God Himself. As the Father of old placed a ram in the place of his only begotten son, Isaac – God did this by sacrificing His own Son to overcome the tyrant. The Precious Blood is the sign of Jesus' own total Self-gift.

7. St. Ambrose: often refers to 1 P 1:18, f.: five sparrows are sold for naught [cf. Lk 12: 6, ff.] – but the dignity of Christians is established in that they are bought for an extraordinary Price, the Precious Blood of the Son of God Himself. the Blood is rightly precious, as it flows from an immaculate body – it is the Blood of god's Son, Who not only redeemed us from the curse of an important Law, but also from the eternal death caused by sin.

In speaking of Sacred Virginity, the great doctor suggests that the good servant is keen on giving back the price which the Master paid for him. Christ did not redeem any of us with paltry gold and silver – He paid His own Precious Blood, and we owe Him this in return. We need to put up to Him what He paid for us. We

incurred an indictment of guilt, a punishment in blood – Jesus offered His for us, and we need to give back our lives to Him. Sacred Virginity is a sacred treasure.

8. **St. Augustine**: interprets Jgs 2:13, f., noting that the Lord has sold His people over into the power of the enemy for little price – the accusation is: You have sold us for nothing! [cf. Ps 43:13] – and notes: as they were sold for nothing, they will be redeemed without money [cf. Is 52:3]. The Prophet does not say ‘without a price’, just not a pecuniary price, like gold or silver. The price of our redemption is the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, that of the unblemished and innocent Lamb of God. It is clear that humans could sell themselves into the slavery of sin, but had no way to pay their way back to freedom. The redeemer paid the Price in His own Precious Blood. No ransom was due to the devil.

9. **St. John Chrysostom**: reads 1 P 1:19 as an acquisition on the part of God – once being creatures of God, we became slaves of Satan. The great price for our freedom is the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ – a most costly price! [cf. 1 Co 6:20; 7:23]. The Compassionate father would pay any price to have his Prodigal son back – God has acquired us for Himself anew.

B. Medieval Doctors

Only **St. Thomas** will be treated here: he did not believe in any price being paid to the Devil – only to God the Father, through the oblation of Christ’s Blood:

...Because with regard to God, redemption was necessary for man’s deliverance, but not with regard to the devil, the price had to be paid not to the devil, but to God. And therefore, Christ is said to have paid **the price of our redemption – His own precious blood – not to the devil but to God**...¹⁷

In his discussions, St. Thomas did not treat much of price, but perhaps more of **reparation, satisfaction**. He does refer to redemption as such in terms such as: ***effusio sanguinis, pretium sanguinis, sanguis Christ***. He offers this commentary on Ep 1:7: *... in Him we have redemption through His Blood...* :

...we have redemption in Him. Concerning this, He has brought about two effects:
- firstly God has proposed a one manner from the part of Christ;
- secondly on the part of God: *...according to the riches of His grace ...*

n. 18: From the part of Jesus Christ He has brought about a two-fold manner: for Christ has gratified us in two ways: there are two effects in us which are repugnant to divine gratification, i.e., the stain of sin and the annoyance of the penalty.

And just as death is repugnant to life, so sin is repugnant to Justice, so that through sin we are distanced from the likeness of God, and we are not pleasing to God. However, through Christ He has gratified us. First because having taken the

¹⁷ III, q. 48, a. 4, ad 3 m.

penalty away, and regarding this the text says that in Jesus Christ we have redemption, i.e., from the slavery of sin [cf. 1 P 1:18: *not in corruptible gold or silver you have been redeemed from your empty tradition, but with the precious blood, etc.* And the Apoc 5:9: *You have redeemed us in Your blood...*

In a second manner we are said to be redeemed, because we have from that slavery in which we are detained because of sin, nor can we on our own fully satisfy for it, but we are liberated through Jesus Christ, because by dying for us, He has made satisfaction to God the Father, and thus the annoyance of the fault is removed. Thus, the text reads *unto the remission of sin* - Jn 1:29: *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world ..* Lk [last chapter, v. 46]: *It was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and to preach in His name penance and the remissions of sins...*

n. 19: Furthermore, the manner on the part of God is established, as the text says *according to the riches, etc.* –as though it would say not only did He remit the sin for us, but He gave His Son, who satisfied for us...¹⁸

Referring to Rm 3:25, St. Thomas does note that a single drop of Christ's Blood was a sufficient price for our redemption¹⁹.

C. Comments on the Text 1 P 1:18-19

1. **Remember!** This introduces the reason why the author both states and appeals to an entire early Christian tradition – the readers are already well instructed in this. The basic 'content' of the authentically Christian tradition is that the author knows that his readers know the story of their **redemptive liberation**. This is already well known to them – it is freely offered, they did not serve in any way to have this bestowed on them.

2. **Ransom**: this is well known biblical term, with a variety of cognates – in the Greco-roman world it was generally understood as a certain price paid for the liberation of slaves, or war prisoners. By means of a payment of a given price, or the actual handing over of money to some one who is keeping someone in captivity. This is so that whoever lets the slave, or captive goes free, does not lose anything. As was seen, many of the earlier theologians, Fathers and Doctors saw this as payment either to the Devil or to God the Father, as St. Thomas noted.

In the matter of freeing slaves, it was also something of a legal fiction that they would save their earnings and give the money thus saved to the temple for the price of freedom. The slave owner would then take the slave to the specific temple, and the slave would be considered to be redeemed by the 'god' of that temple.

¹⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentarium in Ephesios 1:7*. Lectio II, nn. 18, 19 – p. 7.

¹⁹ III Sent. Q. 20, 1.3, ad 4 m

IN the LXX of the OT, the noun was usually found in the plural except in Pr 6:35; 13:8. The verb is generally found in the passive mood in the OT. There has always been a debate whether the image came to the NT from the price paid for the freedom of slaves and captives – or, was the dependence more from the OT liberation by God Himself from the land of slavery in the Torah. IN this latter case, there would be no actual price that would change hands. In Dn 4:34, there is a liberation of the king from his madness – and in Proverbs [6”35’ 13”8] it is used in legal passages regarding a price [cf. Ex 21:20; 30:12; Lv 19:20; 25:22; Nb 3:12].

With Him is copious redemption [Ps 130:7] the usual meaning is technical and religious: the Lord has sent redemption to His people. The first-born is ‘redeemed by the sacrifice of a Lamb [cf. ex 13:13, 15: 34:20; Nb 18:15, 17] – sometimes regarding a slave, the land [cf. Lv 19:20] and vows [cf. Lv 27:13] In Si 49:10, a special usage: the 12 prophets comforted the people and redeemed them by their faith and hope – the meaning is strengthened.

With few OT exceptions, then, almost countless passages the term refers to the liberation of the People by God Himself – with no price paid. There is generally, too, a close connection, or tie, with that liberation from servitude connected with the Covenant of Sinai, whereby Israel becomes the ‘first-born’, the ‘possession of God Himself – bought and paid for [cf. Ex 19: ,5,f.]. this purchased people does appear in 1 P 2:9 and applied to Christians: ***You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into His own wonderful light...*** [cf. 1 P 2:9].

There are several ‘classical’ OT texts that set the stage for much of the later use of this term:

... I have remembered My Covenant with Abraham... I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burden of your captors and I will deliver you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment, and I will take you for My people, and I will be your God and you shall know that I am the Lord your God... [cf. Ex 6:5-7]

... You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set His love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of the peoples; but it is because the lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the House of Bondage, and from the land of the Pharaoh... [cf. Dt 7:6-8].

In the NT, the particular verb form occurs twice in addition to the passage in 1 P 1:18 [cf. Lk 24:21; Tt 2:14]. In Lk there is no connotation of any price involved – for the disciples of Emmaus had simply hoped that Jesus was the one to liberate Israel, considered in no way his death as any kind of price by which liberation might be obtained – the understanding seems to be more along the lines of the Messianic liberation of the OT.

In Tt 2:14 the text notes that Jesus was the One who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of His very own, zealous for good deeds.. The emphasis is on the onerous nature of Jesus' redeeming work – no specific mention of Jesus' 'Sacrifice' – and this seems to be the nature of 1 P: the enormous burden that Christ's dying and the shedding of His blood for us was for Him.

3. **1 P More in line with OT:** Petrine scholars note his characteristic use of OT passages. Furthermore, the passage in 1 P makes use of the 'theological passive' – it is God Who has redeemed this People through the shedding of Jesus' Blood : thus, the People has been redeemed. Certainly the people has been bought and paid for 'at a great price' [cf. 1 O 6:20; 7:23]. The Apostle's fervent appeal here that we have all been bought at a great price and we are not to become slaves of anyone or to anything. It is very clear [cf. also Ga 3:13; 4:5] that God's role in this transaction of such a high price is very active, and not symbolic. In olden times, the slave had an active role in his release – here, the moral, religious slave offers nothing for his liberation. The freed-person is meant to be delivered from slavery, for a real free service throughout the NT. Christians are delivered to enjoy freedom, but they also become the special treasure, the special treasure of Christ Himself who put up the precious ransom price. Thus, there is little 'concern' about to whom the price is paid – the emphasis is on the high price of freedom from sin [cf. Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28] The ransomed People becomes God's 'very own' **segullah!**

In the Synoptic tradition when Jesus states: ***the son of Man also came not to be served, but to served, and to give His life as a ransom for many ...*** - the reference is no longer Exodus. What is in the background here is the Fourth Cantic of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah [53:12] - and for some interpreters, there is a hint of the ecclesial community here, which might indeed harken back to Is 53:11: ***if he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs and have a long life and through him what God wishes will be done...***! The statement is clearly an act of love expressed in the key text: Ga 2:20: ... ***Who loved me and gave Himself up for me...*** Clearly, Jesus' death is a supreme act of love. The word is 'redeemed' from the OT classical texts: ***we are God's very own, His special treasure.***

4. **From the former, useless way of life:** there is a challenge here for conversion. This 'inherited' way of life was not necessarily sinful – what is emphasized here is more terms like empty, useless, worthless, powerless, futile, vain. The term is used in the LXX to emphasize the impact of the gods of the gentiles, as contrasted with the Living God of Israel [cf. Lv 17:7; 2 Ch 11:15; Jr 8:19; 10: 15] – as those who have never known Him [cf. Ws 13:1] – or those who wandered away from Him [cf. Jr 2:5]. It is the NT term to describe the pre-Christian form of life once lived by recent converts [cf. Ac 14:15; rm 1:21; Ep 4:17; cf. Rm 8:20; 1 Co 3:20]. Some interpreters think that Peter's first aim here would be gentile converts – as a Jew would never describe their common heritage as futile. The emphasis might be on the very divergent gentile background, their rather loose ethical values when compared with the demanding God of Israel.

5. Redemption is an onerous task: it was not easy to redeem these converts for neither God the Father, nor Jesus Christ. The Father's burden was that He did not spare His only Son, but offered Him up [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16] as He so loved the world. This Redemption has been achieved at enormous cost – the 'ransom price' was not paid in anything perishable – the context seems reminiscent of Is 52:3: *You were sold for nothing, and redeemed without silver and gold.* Isaiah could very well be fulfilled here. God Himself is the Agent of this redemption – it seems that the grammatical construction here would not allow even the hint of price in payment to someone. 'Redemption' here is really a moral transformation, effecting deliverance from the vain former way of life. Now, the shedding of the Precious Blood of Jesus has brought about the infusion of new life. As silver and gold can perish, the Blood of Christ and its effects cannot be dimmed by time – the shedding of one's own blood indicates a much higher price than some *sheckels* taken from his/her pocket book. The Son's Blood is more precious to the Father than anything else – and it is identified with his life.

6. The Redemptive Power of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ: this is central to the Christian tradition that needs to be recalled here, remembered [cf. Ac 20:28; Rm 3:24, f.; Ep 1:7; Heb 9:12; Col 1:20]. The efficacy of Blood has ancient roots in the OT – as it is identified with one's soul, or life [cf. Lv 17:11, 14 Gn 9:4; Dt 12:23]: **For the life of all flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life it conveys. For the blood, or the life, is a sacred thing and reserved for the altar.** Thus, it may serve as an instrument best suited to **purify, to consecrate, to unite to God.** The blood is 'life' eminently divine in a human being, and thus can be elevated to produce a divine effect. The sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ through the offering of His most Precious Blood, has been the cause of our redemption. It is 'Precious': in its Source [that of Jesus Christ Himself] – as well as in its universal time-less effect.

7. This Precious Blood of the Lamb of God, flowing from the Divine Love, produces Faith, Hope: this sacrificial terminology opens up a number of 'thematic' connections. Peter uses many figurative expressions [cf. 1P 1:24; 2:2, 5, 25; 3:7; 5:8] – His sacrifice here is compared to the Lamb, one who is faultless, without blemish. The sacrificial victim needed to be perfect – it is used here in a moral sense, not just some ritual perfection. The mention of Blood and the faultless Lamb open up a number of interpretations:

- the **Paschal Lamb of Exodus**, image of Israel's liberation from the House of slavery. Jesus in this view, is being characterized as the Passover sacrifice as happens often in the NT [cf. 1 Co 5:7; Jn 19:36=ex 12:46]. However, Spicq notes that the blood of the Exodus victim was used as protective, and not as redemptive.
- the **Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53**: the emphasis here would be Jesus' patience, innocence – it is these heroic qualities that add to the precious nature of the Blood. Yet others do not immediately see the sacrificial aspect of Is 53, even though he

offers his life in atonement. Many scholars hold that OT sacrifices could not redeem, but only expiate. Some scholars argue this is precisely the connection – the sacrifice of Jesus is both redemptive and expiatory.

- **all of the above, citing Is 53:7; Jn 1:29f 36; 1 Co 5:7**: Jesus is indeed the Suffering servant; there is the theme of the Exodus delivery from slavery – and the lamb without blemish brings in the entire OT sacrificial system. This third view is ore comprehensive, and offers a better synthesis perhaps of the entire OT system of sacrifice, more in accord with Peter's OT insistence.

Summary

[1] The text deals with remembering the tradition – and being committed to a conversion from the former way of life. In the **Law of Holiness** of Leviticus [cc. 17-26; cf. Lk 6] there is seen a clear explanation of sacrificial blood [cf. Lv 22:17-25]– here an act of God's life, that represents conversion from a former way of life, and for the new life of Christ Jesus. Thee could be the cultic meaning of the victim 'without blemish' – which we all should be in the new life.

[2] This is an appeal of conversion from a former, non-believing way of life for the new life represented in the Precious Blood of Christ Jesus. Sacrifice is the essential moment of such deliverance, epitomized by the sprinkling of the Precious Blood here through the reception of Baptism, Eucharist and the new life.

[3] In this simple passage of 1 P 1:18-19, there is a marvelous mingling of these OT so much in accord with Peter's regular style of OT dependence [cf. Ex 19:5-6; Dt 7:7, ff.; Dt 21:23; Os 118:22; Is 28:16; 43: 20, f.; 53:4, 5, 12]. There is a great inter-play here of Trinitarian Theology and Christology.



Excursus II: The Sacred Side

Introduction

1. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE GRAIN OF WHEAT:

This chapter 12 of John presents the episode of the Greeks who would like to see Jesus, leads right into the discourse of the “hour” of the glorification of the Son of Man (v 23). Then follows three verses (24-26) that present the grain of wheat falling into the ground, which must die. The passage ends with the prayer of Jesus, very like the prayer of the Synoptics present in Gethsemane – and His declaration that He has come into the world for the purpose of glorifying the Father.

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 (cfr Rv 14:4), following Him wherever He is. The true disciple is asked to follow Him through to the very end.

The “grain of wheat”, first of all is Jesus. This symbol of the grain of wheat is not far removed from the insistence on the Unleavened Bread, the celebration of a new springtime (cfr 1 Co 5:7, ff.). One almost naturally will make the association that the impending death of Jesus will also bestow manna in the desert (cfr Ex 16:4, ff.; Jn 6:32, ff.) – and there will be a new celebration of the Feast of Azymes.²⁰

2. IT IS BETTER THAT ONE SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE (cfr Jn 11:50)

From plant life, a rather indifferent, unwitting prophecy: “it is better” that someone should die, rather than the 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 (cfr Jn 4:20). The “place”, too, could mean the temple.

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 (cfr Jn 11:51).

Knowingly, these passages are full of eschatological overtones: the great fears being expressed for the people and the city (cfr Is 43:5; Jr 33:3; Ezk 34:12). The prophets saw the “dispersed” streaming back to Zion, the Holy City, or Mount Zion (cfr Is 2:2, f.; 60:3, ff.). Zechariah (cfr 14:16, ff.) saw them all coming home at the end of time for a grandiose celebration of Tabernacles. Ezechiel had promised the lord would maintain His sanctuary among them (cfr Ezk 36:24, ff.).

²⁰ cfr. Nokter Fuglister, *Il valore salvifico della pasqua*. Brescia: Paideia 1976, pp. 123, ff.

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 (cfr Jn 10:16).

The effects of Jesus' redemptive death were far broader than the "nation" 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 mission – so, likewise, His followers can beam in His light. All who receive the light are empowered to be the children, the heirs of God (cfr Jn 1:12). Jesus' mission is universal – the flock He has in view are each human being created, redeemed by God. At the last supper, in his "Yom Kippur" prayer, Jesus prayed for Himself, as high priest – for the other priests, the apostles – and for all who would ever come to believe in Him (cfr Jn 17:21).

3. THE GOOD SHEPHERD (cfr Jn 10):

With even more clarity, the symbolism presents a well known OT type. Here, there is great emphasis on His "call" (cfr Jn 10:3, f., 200, and His willingness to offer Himself (cfr Jn 10:11). 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.

The Shepherd symbolism surely goes back to the "Pierced One of Zechariah" (cfr 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 (cfr Jn 19:27) – whereas the Synoptics present Jesus reciting the prophecy concerning the "Striking the Shepherd" from Zechariah on the way from the Last Supper to the Garden of Olives. There may also be a lesson for the apostles in Jesus' contrasting the hired hands who run away (cfr Jn 10:12), and the apostles who will run (cfr Jn 16:32). Nonetheless, they will be proven and tried, and purified.

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 (cfr 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" (cfr Is 50:5, ff.).

The Good Shepherd image of John offers these aspects:

- the Pastoral Image: this is the image of the Shepherd guiding the flock, to the rich pasturage; the shepherd as nourishing, healing, providing;

- the “Soteriological” Image: the Shepherd who saves the flock by giving His own life; this is the Servant, Struck by God, pierced through – the Shepherd who is “struck” by God.²¹

4. THE IMMOLATION OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON:²²

The memory of the offering of Isaac was kept alive particularly in the festival of Passover. John 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 for it (cfr 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.

It should be admitted that indeed there is relatively little reflection on the comparison between Christ and Isaac.²³ The passages from both Paul and John seem to be based on the OT 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 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 (cfr Gn 22:2-12).

There are striking parallels between Genesis and John:

- 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.

The NT tradition does mention the offering of the “only, most beloved” (cfr 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 (cfr Heb 10:5, ff.).

Hebrews and Romans are close to John in spirit – but it is the 4th gospel (cfr Jn 3:16) which closely captures the OT spirit: God indeed gave up His only begotten, much loved Son. The full acceptance on the part of Christ is also much emphasized by John (an aspect not emphasized in the OT texts, but very much a part of the Rabbinic Aqedah. This rabbinic tradition places Isaac as an adult, and lays down willingly on the altar – a particular that the OT does not include.

The willingness of Jesus may be seen in His overall choice to carry out the Father’s will (cfr Jn 10:17, ff.) – especially in the Good Shepherd theme. Repeatedly it is shown that Jesus was taken in charge, was bound, seized (cfr Jn 18:12-24; 19:17, ff.).

²¹ cfr. Rudolf Schnackenburg, Vol 2, pp. 295, f.

²² cfr. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 1, pp. 157, ff.

²³ cfr. however: R. LeDeaut, *La nuit pascale*. Rome: Institut Biblique Pontificale 1963, pp. 133-213. cfr. also James Swetnam, SJ, *Jesus and Isaac*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, Analecta Biblica 94, 1981.

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.

Isaac is not explicitly identified with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah – yet, perhaps through the title the “beloved” – this comes to light. Along with the title MONOGENES (only-begotten), Isaac is also described as the “beloved”: AGAPETOS (cfr Gn 22:2, 12, 16). In John (cfr 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9), there seems to be an overlapping of these two titles in reference to Jesus Christ.²⁴

While the Suffering Servant may defy any explicit textual mention, yet the traits of the Servant do call to mind Isaac. The life of Isaac is offered, and God accepts the oblation. The Servant is eventually is immolated as a lamb (cfr Is 53:7; Gn 22:7). The death of the Servant is indeed “in atonement” (cfr Is 53:10).

5. JESUS AS THE SERVANT (LAMB) OF GOD:

Very early in John's gospel (cfr 1:29, 36), 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.

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” (cfr Is 42:1, ff.). He has been called to the Light of the World (cfr 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 (cfr Is 50:4, ff.). In the 4th and most important Cantic (cfr Is 52:13-53:12), Jesus is “pierced through”, and by His wounds, our wounds are healed. He offers His life as (**ASHAM**) the holocaust of atonement.

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 that way.²⁵

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 – the apocalyptic figure of the Lamb was applied to the person of the Messiah, King and Judge.

²⁴ cfr. C. Spicq, OP, *Agape dans le NT. Analyse des textes*. Paris: Gabalda 1959, Vol 2, pp. 70, ff.: “AGAPETOS dans les epîtres du NT.”

²⁵ This possibility is discussed by F.M. Braun, OP, *Jean le théologien. Les grandes traditions d'Israël l'accord des Écritures d'après le quatrième évangile*. Paris: Gabalda 1964, Vol 2, pp. 69-86.

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 John's gospel (cfr 2:13, 23; 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 (cfr 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 (cfr Jn 19:32, ff.), and this was substituted for by the extremely symbolic piercing of the side of Jesus (cfr Ex 12:46; Nb 9:12);
- in John's gospel, Jesus is clearly the New Temple; "He was speaking of the sanctuary of His body" (cfr Jn 2:19, ff).²⁶

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 Lamb. These sacrificial animals were seen to have a "propitiatory value". There was a passage from the darkness into the light (cfr Jn 8:21); from slavery into service (cfr Jn 8:32, ff.); from sure death to eternal life (cfr Jn 5:24). Furthermore, in John, the Exodus symbols are most evident: the bronze serpent (cfr Jn 3:14); the manna (Jn 6); the source of living water from the rock (cfr Jn 7:38); the column of fiery cloud (cfr 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 them, and allow them to have joyful courage (cfr Ws 18:6).

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 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 grace of "passing over" from the darkness of slavery and death into the freedom of service and life.

6. THE SELF OBLATION OF JESUS (Cfr Jn 17:19)

The Priestly Prayer of Jesus is not unlike the high priest's prayer of Yom Kippur. It is a prayer intimately associated with the 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

²⁶ cfr. 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.

seems to be Good Shepherd connotations (cfr Jn 10:11, 15) and Eucharistic (cfr 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.

“Consecration”, though, has special connotations: the Father had “consecrated” Jesus and sent Him into this world (cfr Jn 10:36). The “consecration of Jesus would include – and surpass – the following:

- the sharing of His doctrine (cfr Jn 17:18);
- the manifestations of His name (cfr Jn 17:6, 26);
- His offer to protect the Apostles (cfr Jn 17:12).

Jesus’ “consecration” of His life is the external surrender to death – a kind of exteriorization of the profound inner unity between the Father and the Son, expressed through loving obedience.

“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 truth. Jesus consecrates Himself “for others”, for whom He gives His life (cfr Jn 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50, f.; 15:13).

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 (cfr Heb 9:11, ff.).

Therefore, John presents the mystery of Redemption in liturgical terms of sacrifice out of love.



C. NT THEMES

1. THE CALVARY SCENE (Jn 19):

It is in the Calvary scene that the Gospel of John seems to gather 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! (cfr Jn 19:245, 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 John, 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. He has come to strengthen wavering faith.

At this solemn moment, there is the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. Many believe that Genesis 3:15 is in the background here: 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" (cfr Gn 3:20), with all the more reason is this true of Mary.

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 (cfr Is 26:17). Or, Sion, only just in labor, brings forth sons (cfr Is 66:8, ff.). A woman in childbirth does suffer because her time has come – but her joy will be great, knowing that new life is born into this world (cfr Jn 16:21).

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 in the great moments of the mystery of redemption:

- she belonged to the OT period of expectancy, as a realization of the Daughter of Sion;
- she was present in a unique manner at Jesus birth (cfr Lk 1-2);
- she was present as Jesus initiated His public life (cfr Jn 2);
- she is present as Jesus "ex-pires" (cfr Jn 19:27);
- she is present again as the Church comes to birth (cfr Ac 1:4) – really born out of the side of Christ.

Hers is a usually “retiring” presence, yet one that is dynamic in its expression and activity for those in need. In extraordinary faith, hope and love she follows the merciful plan of the Heavenly Father, carried out in the life of Christ. Her prayer interprets the dreams and hopes of the anonymous Anawim.

b. “Everything has now been completed . . . to fulfill the Scriptures perfectly . . . It is accomplished . . .” (cfr Jn 19:28-30).

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 up on Mary as “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”.

Like the “New Servant”, Jesus’ task was to gather into one the scattered children of God (cfr Jn 11:52). “All” is now fulfilled – the tunic will not be divided (cfr Jn 21:11). To open 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. (cfr Jn 13:1, ff.).

c. “I thirst”: (cfr Jn 19:38) (Physical/Mystical/Trinitarian): Scholars have worked out something of a balance:

“Everything had been accomplished . . .” It is accomplished... I thirst (cfr v 28) ***He gave up His Spirit*** (v 30). This would bring together the “thirst” of Jesus and His “ex-piration”, the giving up of His Spirit.

Once again, the by-now pattern is familiar: with the thirst of Jesus, there is general misunderstanding. “Vinegar” is repeated three separate times (cfr vv 29, 30). The Synoptics present this action as one of derision (cfr Lk 23:36). In John’s rendition, the symbolism present might well be understood in the light of his treatment of “thirst and water” thus far in his gospel.

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 of the Holy Spirit. Earlier Jesus had promised the disciples that He would ask the Father to send “another Paraclete” when His own mission was over (cfr Jn 14:16). He also described somewhat the mission of the Spirit, to be Jesus’ “witness” (cfr Jn 15:26). The Spirit of 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 (cfr Jn 16:13, ff).

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 mission. Jesus physical thirst is a revelation of His spiritual thirst of sharing His message and His “existential thirst” of sending the Holy Spirit.

The thirst of Jesus is His consuming yearning for the Father's glory. His loving 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"* (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 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 (cfr Zc 12:10).

e. A soldier pierced His side with a lance . . . immediately there came out blood and water (cfr Jn 19:34):

Perhaps the emphasis on the "blood" in this passage (as later, 1 Jn 5:6, ff., the order is reversed) is to show that the death of Jesus indeed was sacrificial. In order for the spirit to come, symbolized by John 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.²⁷

The piercing of the side of Christ, mentioned only in John, is shrouded both in the mystery of 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.

This is the gospel of the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (cfr Jn 19:26) – or, at least, the author presents himself as an eyewitness 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 Christ (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 (cfr 1 Jn 1:1, f.). He is communicating this faith of his so that all indeed might believe, and come to life.

The basic symbolic sense had already been given by John when he recorded Christ in His discourse for the Festival of the Tabernacles (cfr Jn 7:38). Tabernacles, as is well known, which provided the background for this Johannine prophecy, was a festival that prayed for rain. The ritual commemorated the miracle of water in the Exodus (cfr 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 (cfr Ezk 47:1, ff.). There was also recalled the fountain of purifying water promised in the last times by Zechariah (13:1; 14:8).

²⁷ cfr. Ignace de la Potterie, p. 42-47.

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 (cfr Jn 1:29, 36); Jesus is indeed the bread of life for the world (cfr Jn 6); He is the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His flock (cfr Jn 10:15). Jesus died for the dispersed children of God (cfr 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 to the one they have pierced”* (cfr Jn 19:37):

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 John 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 mission will be completed by the Holy Spirit.

The text of Zechariah here (cfr 12:10; 13:1) offers a culmination and response to this mystery of mercy. Whatever the background of Zechariah’s thought, some atrocious crime has been committed against someone. This unfair death is the fault of the people. 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.

In accord with the texts of Zechariah, John brings together the “pierced one” and the eschatological font of the living waters. John 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.

John brings together here the old mystery of the Exodus: to be healed in the desert, it was enough to look upon the bronze serpent (cfr Nb 21:4-9). The Son of Man was destined to be “lifted up” (cfr 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 (cfr Is 12:3).

The Apocalypse presents this “Pierced One” as coming at the end of time, “on the clouds”, much like the Son of Man in glory (cfr Rv 1:7). Even those who have pierced Him will see Him – at the end of time, the eyes of all will be “opened”.

As “thirst” was seen on several levels, so also is “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.

Through the centuries, the “vision of faith” of believers will be translated into a mourning. In a sense, the Church may be perpetuated by this scene on Calvary. The “assembly” of the faithful are those who have accepted the great paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus is “raised up” (cross/resurrection) (cfr Jn 3:14, ff.; 6:44; 12:32), all are drawn to Him: by the communication of His divine revelation – and by the deep inner stirrings of the heart, the “prevenient grace” of the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Pierced One invites those who will contemplate the mystery.

In the 4th gospel, there is a kind of Trinitarian dimension to the “teaching of God, predicted in the prophecy of the New Covenant. Jeremiah had predicted that all would come to “know” the Lord, through the fact that He never calls sin to mind anymore (cfr 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 (cfr Jn 6:45). The whole preaching of Jesus is simply what the Father has taught Him (cfr Jn 8:28). And the Holy Spirit will remind the faithful of all that Jesus has taught (cfr Jn 14:25, ff.).

The Pierced One “opens a door” to the mystery of redemption. To reach glorification, Jesus had to go the way of the Cross (cfr 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 redemption from the Cross. The entire fourth gospel is orientated from the beginning toward the cross. Throughout John’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 – all are presented through a most skillful tapestry of OT texts and realities.²⁸

²⁸ cf. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 1, pp. 178-182, passim; Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John, XIII-XXI*. Anchor Bible, Vol 29 A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1970, pp. 944-956.

g. Three Witnesses: The Spirit, the Water and the Blood (cfr 1 Jn 5:6-8):

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. The gospel speaks of the “children” of God, as those 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.

The author of Jn’s Epistles has responded repeatedly that Jesus is not divisible (cfr 1 Jn 1:3; 2:1; 3:23; 4:2; 5:5, 20). There was no mere temporary union 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 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.²⁹

There are various interpretations of this passage.³⁰ 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.

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 Christ.

Strict exegesis could not attribute all this symbolism to the intention of John. There is, though, almost a natural affiliation between water and Baptism, and the book 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.

The appeal of the letter 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

²⁹ cfr. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 1, pp. 169, f.

³⁰ cfr. Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John*. The Anchor Bible, Vol 30. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982, pp. 594-599, and 575-578, 775-787.

moves “preveniently” with His grace; the catechumens ask and receive baptism, prior to being admitted to the eucharistic table. Then, all three, in the baptized person, incorporated into Christ Jesus also by the Eucharist, then become committed to the mission of Jesus Christ.

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.

The reception of baptism in the Spirit, and incorporation into Christ convey a very special share in the paschal mystery. This offers purification from sin, birth from on high and the life of faith.³¹



2. The Pierced Side of Christ [Jn 19:34]: Sts. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas & Bonaventure in Vatican II

... one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water... [Jn 19:34]

... everyone will see Him, even those who have pierced Him... [Rv 1:7].

... Over the House of David and the citizens of Jerusalem, I will pour out a spirit of kindness and prayer. They will look on the one they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as for an only son, and weep for Him as people weep for a first-born child ... [cf. Zc 12:10]

...When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for the House of David and the citizens of heaven, for sin and impurity... [Zc 13:1].



... 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*]. [CCC # 112]



³¹ cfr. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 2, pp. 146-150.

Introduction:

While Adam slept, the Lord took one of his ribs ... [cf. Gn 2:21, ff.]

While this text provides the type of what would happen on Calvary, other than one text in St. Thomas, there is a decided preference for the **opening of the Side of Christ**, from which the Streams of Salvation would flow. Here are some of the texts of St. Thomas emphasizing the rib, and their interpretation:

[1] Four Generations: remembering this citation regarding Adam and Eve, St. Thomas speaks of four biblical generations: Adam created directly by God; Eve created by God from the Side of Adam; their children blessed by God through the agency of both; the Birth of Christ without Mary knowing Man.³²

[2] OT Types of the 'New Birth' [Jn 3:3]: all of these OT types pale before the New Birth stated by Christ in Jn 3:3, a new birth from above, which surpasses all of these: the birth of Eve; sterile women giving birth; Elisaeus drawing forth from water; the Crossing of the Sea of Reeds; Naaman the Syrian general cured by the water of the Jordan – Isaac being born in the old age of his parents, and the eagle renewing its youth: all figures of the **New Birth**.³³

[3] A Sign of Marriage established by God: Gn 2:21, ff. Is often used for the marriage between man and woman – elevated by Christ to the level of Sacrament.³⁴

[4] A Distant Sign of the Blessed Mother of God: Gn 2:21, f., provides an ancient type for the 'Woman' who would conceive God's Son, a Virgin giving birth to a Son.³⁵

³² **Super I Cor., cap. 11 vs. 11:**

... Et nota hic quadruplicem generationem: prima fuit viri sine muliere, in qua materia fuit terra, artifex fuit Deus solus, Gen. II: formavit Deus hominem etc. secunda fuit mulieris de viro solo, et in hac materia fuit **costa**, artifex vero Deus, Gen. II: tulit Deus unam de costis; tertia vero ex viro et muliere, et in hac materia fuit comixtio sanguinum et operatrix natura, Io. I: qui non ex sanguinibus etc. quarta, de muliere sine viro, et haec Christi, in qua materia fuit corpus virginis, auctor spiritus sanctus, Matth. I: quod in ea natum est de spiritu sancto est; et ista est quarta generatio de qua dicitur Gen. XV: generatione quarta revertetur huc etc.

³³ **Catena in Io., cap. 3 l. 3:**

Sed dicet aliquis: quid commune habet haec nativitas, de qua scilicet Christus locutus est, ad Iudaica dogmata? Habet quidem commune: nam qui primus homo factus est, et quae **de costa facta est mulier**, et quae **steriles genuerunt**, et quae **per aquam miracula perfecta sunt**: dico autem, quod Elisaeus de aqua ferrum eduxit, et quod Iudaei mare rubrum transierunt, et quod Naaman Syrus in Iordane purgatus est: haec omnia nativitatem spiritualem et purgamentum in ea futurum figuraliter personabant; et ea quae a prophetis sunt dicta, occulte ostendunt hunc nativitatis modum; ut puta illud: **renovabitur ut aquilae iuventus tua**; et: beati quorum remissae sunt iniquitates. Sed et Isaac figura huius nativitatis erat.

³⁴ **Summa Theologiae I, q. 92 a. 3 co.**

Respondeo dicendum quod conveniens fuit mulierem formari de **costa** viri. Primo quidem, ad significandum quod inter virum et mulierem debet esse socialis coniunctio.

³⁵ **Super Sent., lib. 3 d. 3 q. 2 a. 1 ad 1:**

[5] NT Miracles surpass the Wonder of Gn 2:21, f.: the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee is a greater wonder.³⁶

[6] The Classic Example: Eucharist and the Church, flowing from the side of Christ: St. Thomas has two texts where **costa** and **latere** come together:

[a] The Eucharist ³⁷

[b] The Church.³⁸

Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod in conceptione Christi fuit duplex miraculum; unum quod femina concepit Deum, aliud quod virgo peperit filium. Quantum ergo ad primum beata virgo se habebat ad conceptionem **secundum potentiam obedientiae tantum**, et adhuc multo remotius quam **costa** viri, ut ex ea mulier formaretur. In talibus autem simul dantur actus et potentia ad actum, secundum quam dici posset quod hoc est possibile

³⁶ **Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 11 q. 1 a. 3 qc. 3 arg. 3. – CANA & WATER**

Praeterea, quanto minus est de potentia ex parte creaturae in qua fit miraculum, tanto est majus miraculum quod fit per potentiam divinam. Sed in hac conversione minimum est de potentia in creatura: quia in quibusdam conversionibus miraculosis est potentia naturalis, sicut quod **aqua conversa fuit in vinum**, in quibusdam autem potentia obedientiae tantum: sicut quando **costa formata est in mulierem**; in creatione autem etsi non praecedat aliqua potentia, tamen non est aliqua repugnantia. Ergo cum in hac conversione sit repugnantia, et nulla potentia ex parte creaturae, quia non potest esse aliquid in potentia respectu totius compositi; videtur quod **haec conversio sit miraculosior omni alia mutatione**.

³⁷ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 79 a. 1 co. :**

Et ideo effectum quem passio Christi fecit in mundo, hoc sacramentum facit in homine. Unde super illud **Ioan. XIX, continuo exivit sanguis et aqua**, dicit Chrysostomus, quia hinc suscipiunt principium sacra mysteria, cum accesseris ad tremendum calicem, vel **ab ipsa bibiturus Christi costa, ita accedas**. Unde et ipse dominus dicit, **Matth. XXVI, hic est sanguis meus, qui pro vobis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum**.

Catena in Io., cap. 19 l. 10.

Chrysostomus. Et quia hinc suscipiunt principium sacra mysteria, cum accesseris ad tremendum calicem, ut **ab ipsa bibiturus Christi costa, ita accedas**. Theophylactus.

³⁸ **Super I Cor., cap. 11 vs. 7:**

Primo quidem quantum ad dignitatem principii: cum enim imago sit expressa similitudo eius cuius est imago, vir in hoc dicitur imago Dei quod sicut Deus est principium omnium rerum, ita vir est principium totius humani generis, Act. XLIII (XVII 26): produxit ex uno etc. Secundo quantum ad Christum: **sicut enim ex latere Christi in cruce dormientis profluxit sanguis et aqua per quae instituta sunt sacramenta per quae salvatur Ecclesia, ita ex latere viri soporati et dormientis extracta est costa de qua formata est mulier**.

[7] Christ is the Head of this Church: this would be made clear in Ep 2.³⁹

John 19:34⁴⁰

1. The Soldier's Action [19:32-34 a]:

a. It seems as though Pilate gave permission to take the body down, 'so' the soldiers set about the task. Earlier, the enemies of Jesus had wanted the scroll nailed to the Cross exhibit a different reading – and Pilate responded that what he had written, was written! Here, they wanted his legs broken – and once again, this desire was not granted, as Jesus was already dead. In the mystery of God, this is all to fulfill the Scriptures: earlier the soldiers decided not to tear the tunic, fulfilling **Ps 22:19** – and here they do not break His legs, fulfilling **Ps 34:24**.

b. The death of Jesus brought some surprise to Pilate. The attestation of his death was not merely to strengthen the resurrection story – but, to show the power of Jesus' death – the blood and water are life-giving elements, that will flow as from the streams of salvation [cf. Is 12:1, ff.]. Earlier a Roman Centurion is the agent for a Christological Profession of Faith [cf. Mk 15:39; Mt 27:54] - he is given a name in Matthew, Longinus – here the Roman soldier is the agent for the appearing of the blood and water.

c. Some exegetes see a lack of logic here – Jesus was already dead, so they pierced His side. However, the soldier might merely have been looking for some kind of a physical reaction to such rough probing – this seems to please more interpreters that the sometimes suggested *coup de grace*. The verb used could mean either a prodding to awaken someone who had fallen asleep – and it could imply a deep piercing, a plunge of the lance into the side of Christ.

d. The piercing of the side reminds many of the creation story [cf. **Gn 2: 21, f.**] where God takes a 'rib' from the side of the sleeping Adam and creates Eve, His help-mate. There is no indication which side it was: some crucifixes have the left [over the heart], others have the right [perhaps connected to **Ezk 47: 1**, where the water flowed from the right side of the New Temple]. Symbolic discussions abound – and this concerns the blood and water particularly.

³⁹ **Super I Cor., cap. 11 vs. 3:**

Sed hic dicitur quodlibet istorum caput secundum ista tria. Vir quidem dicitur caput mulieris quia praesidet, Gen. III 16: sub viri potestate eris, quia gubernat, I Pet. III 6: sicut Sara obediebat Abrahae, dominum eum vocans, Eph. VI (V 22): mulieres subditae sint etc. et **quia de eius costa sumpta est**, Gen. II 25: vocavit eam virago quia de viro etc. **Christus autem est caput viri, quia praesidet**, Eph. II (I 22): ipsum dedit **caput super omnem Ecclesiam quae est corpus**, Ps. (71 8): dominabitur a mari usque ad mare, quia dona gratiarum effundit, Eph. III 7: unicuique data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi; quia est conformis nostrae naturae, Phil. II 6: qui cum in forma Dei esset etc.

⁴⁰ Raymond E. Brown, SS, **The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels.** Vol. 2. Doubleday 1993, pp 1176-1182, passim.

2. The Blood and Water [cf. 19:33a b]: Mk and Mt present wondrous signs at the death of Jesus. Church Fathers and theologians have developed the symbolism here in a remarkable manner, as will be seen: in summary, this eye witness account has been interpreted as indications of God's love, the source of the Church, and the sacraments. Books, such as, *A Doctor Looks at Calvary*, have also added their technical weight to the interpretation of what happened here. None of this, most likely, was in Jn's mind in recording what happened. Again, most likely, Jn would not have recorded it if it was not something quite remarkable in his eyes. The expression of the text is comparable to Jn's terminology of seeing a heavenly witness [cf. Jn 1:34; 3:112, 32, f.] – a long tradition has seen this as miraculous.

a. There seems little doubt that for Jn this phenomenon was something important for the tradition of the Church to know, that this would enrich the 'theology', teaching of the Church. There were **old pagan myths** describing the gods of having a special divine liquid in their veins – but, this would be a hard 'sell' among scholars – Jn has little to do with pagan myths.

b. A second possibility is that Jn had in mind to offer something of a response to the **Gnostic docetistic views** which outright denied Jesus' death on the Cross. The trouble with this opinion is that this particular view did not come into some popularity perhaps until St. Irenaeus' time. There seems little doubt regarding the real death of Jesus – the testimony of the eye witness, and the hasty action of the Roman soldier.

c. A greater 'biblical' possibility is that Jn was thinking of **Jesus as the Paschal Lamb** – an **authentic sacrificial victim** - and the blood of the victim needed to be sprinkled. This view still does not answer why Jn would have included also the water. Furthermore, the Paschal Lamb imagery would be more connected with the shedding of blood.

d. Others see here OT references:

- **the birth of the woman from the side of the first Adam** [cf. Gn 2:21, f.];
- the **Suffering Servant** is here pouring out his soul [life] [cf. Is 53:12];
- this is the **New Moses**, with the Exodus imagery of causing water to flow from the rock [cf. Ex 17];
- - Jesus is the **New Temple with water flowing from His right side** [cf. Ezk 47:12, f.]- Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit which Believers would yet receive – in His *ex-spíration* on the Cross, Jesus returns to the Father [cf. Jn 12:23, f., 28-32; 13:1; 17:1, 10, f.], not leaving us orphans, but leaving a New Paraclete. There are many images of the coming of the Spirit – Jesus' Breath and the fresh water – the emphasis is **always the Spirit coming from within Jesus**, He is the Spirit of Jesus. When He is 'lifted up'. He will draw all to Himself [cf. 12:32]
- the Prophet Isaiah spoke of **drawing water joyfully from the streams of salvation** [*Haurietis Aquas*] [this seems to have Johannine support:

Jn 7: 38, f.: ***From His breast will flow streams of fountains of living water...*** All who believe in Him will receive the Spirit.

- Deutero-Zechariah speaks of a **Pierced One in connection with streams of purification** in closely related verses: [cf. Zc 12:10; 13:1, ff.].

e. **NT Tie:** the presence of the **Roman Soldiers** is important here: there is a comparison that can be made between Mk 15:39 and Jn 19:34. Jesus' death is truly salvific and there is a broad application to His Redemption. Mk has a gentile confess Jesus: ... ***In truth, this man was a son of God!*** The soldier in Mk makes a profession of faith in Jesus Christ – the soldier in Jn is the Agent through whom the Holy Spirit comes.

3. **The True Witness:** the true witness is one who has seen, knows the facts and relates them for the faith of the Church. Some sharp interpreters feel that two persons are indicated here by Jn: *and the one who has seen has borne witness – and true is his witness.* The usual interpretation is that this is one person, the **beloved Disciple** [cf. Jn19:26,f.; 21:20].

However, some complication arises from this verse: *and that one knows that he speaks what is true in order that you, too, may believe ...* [cf. 19:35 b]. There is a plethora of opinions regarding this 'he':

- either God, or Jesus: already mentioned in 19:33 – Jn often refers to both as witness - even the Paraclete symbolized by water – the witness, *par excellence* [cf. 15:26]. However: this seems excessive to many interpreters
- the writer of the 4th gospel is the witness – it is emphasized that his witness is true [cf. 21:24];
- the Beloved Disciple is the witness to the Christological message here and the salvific effects of the death of Jesus. As John the Baptist was a witness early in Jn [cf. 1:34], proclaiming that Jesus is the Lamb of God to be sacrificed. He is the most perceptive of the Apostles – he believes just seeing the garments in the empty tomb, while Peter had to go in an 'investigate' more carefully. He is convinced that Jesus' death on the cross is life-giving [cf. 1 Co 15:6 and Jn 19:35].

4. **The 'Scriptures' [Exodus; II-Zechariah] are fulfilled:** [19:24, 28], they are complete, all is consummated, finished. The whole of Sacred Scripture is completed here with Jesus' death. There are two texts in particular that come to the fore here:

- **His [or: 'its'] legs were not broken** [cf. 19:36]: this is an old law [cf. ex 12:10; 12:46; Nb 9:12] that could refer here either to the **Paschal Lamb** – or, the **Persecuted Just Man** in the Psalms:

- **The Lamb**: Jn opens up describing Jesus as the Lamb of God [cf. 1:29, 36] – all takes place at the hour when the lambs are being slaughtered in the temple – and hyssop was used to sprinkle the lamb's blood [cf. 19:29] early Christianity was firm in the faith that Jesus the Lamb of God died and His Blood saved the world [cf. 1

Jn 1:7; 1 Co 5:7/ 1 P 1:19; Rv 5:8, f.]. A problem is found in the grammatical construction, with the singular verb – usually it would be in the plural.

- **The Innocent ‘Just’ One [cf. Ps 34:21]:** one problem is that nowhere in the NT is Ps 34 cited with a tie to Jesus’ Passion – yet, its wording would be most meaningful here: ...God **faithfully** answers the prayers of the suffering ‘just’. God’s providence prevented the soldiers from the barbaric act of breaking Jesus legs – He was already dead. There is no agreed upon solution in this discussion. Jesus, however, is the ultimate point of reference – both as Lamb of God and as the Suffering Innocent One.

- **They will look on the One they have pierced! [cf. Zc 12:10]:** this text is seen by some interpreters as adding theological depth to a pre-existing account. Some would tie this in with Dn 7:13: ... ***And I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man...*** Jn’s use of Deutero-Isaiah has sparked its own interest among scholars: after the mention of the Pierced One, there is the almost immediately following [cf. Zc 13:1] the stream of purification that will flow in abundance. Zc becomes part of Jn’s outlook: the spirit of compassion is related to the water, coming out of the side of Jesus. The ‘seeing’ is shared by the beloved disciple, and the Roman soldier who perpetrated this, occasioning the coming of the Spirit. The First-Born Son might indeed connect with Jn20:31: ... ***that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God ...*** The Coming on the clouds brings Rv 1:7 together with Zc 12:10. In Jn’s realized eschatology, judgment is taking place as Jesus has been ‘lifted up’ on the Cross [cf. Jn 3:18; 8:28; 12:32-34]. Some of those seeing Jesus will remain in their obstinacy – but, others will be converted. those who accept the witness of the beloved disciple will see and believe through the Spirit.

5. Reactions: with the sanctuary veil rent, the earth shaken, there are different reactions: one understandable reaction is fear – occasioned also by the darkness over the whole earth. One impression is that the impact of the witnesses to these events is two-fold: one is unrepentant and the other are converted sinners.

†††

a. **St. Augustine** ⁴¹

Presentation:

In the IInd Vatican Council, St. Augustine is quoted twice regarding the Pierced Side of Jesus Christ: **Ennarr. In Ps 138: 2** ⁴² and **De Civ. Dei, Book 22, c. 17**. An introductory word about these major works – a number of spiritual directors feel that a good idea of this great Doctor of the Church can be had by reading his ***Confessions***, along with his ***Expositions of the Psalms*** [6 volumes], and the ***City of God***, a massive tome of nearly 1100 pages in the Penguin Classics recent reprint. Here a word about the latter two:

⁴¹ cf. Martin L. Smith, ***Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background***. Rome: Gregorian 1980, pp. 192- 212.

⁴² Cf. Augustine’s treatment of: Pss 56:11; 65:7; 126:7 as well as Ps 138:2, cited by Vatican II.

[1] **Expositions of the Psalms** - this work in 6 volumes was recently re-translated by Maria Boulding, OSB; with an Introduction by Michael Fiedrowicz; edited by John E. Rotelle, OSA, and printed by New City Press, Hyde Park NY 2000. The following is taken from the Introduction:

[a] **The Psalms as a Prophecy of Christ and the Church:**⁴³ throughout history there has been a markedly Christological and Ecclesial interpretation: the Psalms are a prophecy about Jesus, the Son of God – and the total Christ, the Church. In these outstanding prayers of the Old Covenant, St. Augustine came to see them as a prophecy of Jesus Christ. Augustine maintained that it was necessary to apply them all to Christ if we want to keep to the path of correct understanding. **Prophetic speech was obscured by the figurative language until the Incarnation drew back the OT veil.** Augustine understood more and more that the Son of God and the Church together comprised the central content of the faith.

[b] **The Psalm is a Word to Jesus Christ:** the Son should never be excluded from a prayer to the Father. Augustine's prayer-life is all tied in with his awareness that reconciliation between God and humanity is achieved only through Jesus Christ. All Hope is based on His resurrection. The recurrence of the word *Lord*, was often understood by him as referring to Jesus - he deepened many other Christological interpretations of key concepts and images and symbolic representations.

[c] **Christ in Imagery:** from many key ideas, such as Christ the *corner-stone* [cf. Ps 117:22; Mt 21:42; Ac 4:11; 1 P 2:7], Augustine was able to make other applications, easily linking the world of the Psalms into Christ's mysteries: the way, the fountain, sun, light, bread, door: all came to reflect Jesus Christ. Many abstract notions only made sense when applied to Christ: peace, justice, mercy, truth, wisdom, word: all were more fully understood when applied to Jesus. The mention of a king always applied to Christ, particular because of the Cross inscription – His future coming as Judge, and the guidance of creation.

[d] **The Psalms as a Word about the Church:** apart from figurative explanations of the moon, a dove, ship, winepress,, vine, bride of the King - the OT declarations about God's People in the OT that Augustine applied to the Church. By belonging to Christ Christians continued Abraham's posterity [cf. Ga 3:9] fulfilling the universal promise – like branches in-grafted into a new stock. All are being summoned to praise God – the defeat of peoples came to be understood by him as their conversion, subjection to God in freedom. Zion, the City of God, Jerusalem, the Holy Mountain, and the Temple: ranked as the focus of God's saving presence.

⁴³ St. Augustine. *Expositions of the Psalms*. Vol. I. 2000, pp. 43-60, *passim*. [In several Psalms, St. Augustine develops the image of the Church born from the side Christ on the Cross: cf. Ps 56:11; 65:7; 126:7; 138:2 – these texts will be presented here.

[e] The City of God: in many aspects Augustine's contemplation on the Psalms are a commentary on this other master-piece of the great Doctor. There is a struggle against this City conducted by the power of evil. We are in a foreign land. **Spiritualization, Interiorization, and Eschatological** reference lead to the One reality, God through Jesus Christ.

[f] The Psalms are the Voice of Christ: many NT texts had already placed the Psalms on the lips of Christ. Augustine's Christology and Soteriology were based on the ideal of the admirabile commercium. Christ shared in mortal life so that human would share His divine life forever. Augustine's teaching on the **whole Christ** is expressly designated as the key to a correct understanding in faith of many Psalms. In the Psalms, Christ speaks in His own Name – but, He is also speaking in ours. So many of the Psalms mysteriously phrase His own person and Mission – yet, this is always a limited reality. Augustine deeply believed that the glorified Christ makes use of the Psalms in His eternal adoration in appearing before the Father for us.

[g] The Psalms are the Voice of the Church: it is through membership in the body of the Church where the praying individual enters fully into the membership of the Communion of Saints. The Psalms are the formula of prayer in which the Church discovers and express her life-long procession of faith. The Psalms help verbalize for the sinner the mystery of redemption – the struggle between light and darkness.

[h] Avowedly Eschatological: they offer a timeless reflection, offering a prophecy about Christ and the Church. The Psalms help us to peer through the curtained shrine into the sanctuary – through the ceiling, beyond the clouds, to the celestial Holy of Holies – the Psalms help one's gaze to penetrate the tabernacle Door to the core of the Trinity. They provide a privileged contemplation of God and the praise and adoration of Him. The Wisdom of Christ may be discerned in the Psalms.



St. Augustine's
Exposition in Ps 56:11⁴⁴

Christ's Willing Sleep

11. *He rescued my soul from amid the lion-cubs*, says the Psalm. Why do you say: *He rescued my soul*? What had you endured that you needed to be rescued? *Though disturbed, I lay down to sleep*. This is Christ's way of indicating His death. We read that the OT David fled into a cave, but not that he slept in it, so one David was in the cave, but it is the other David who says here, *Though disturbed, I lay down to sleep*. It must be a special kind of disturbance, even though they were disturbing Him. He described Himself as 'disturbed', with reference only to the belief of His furious enemies, not from any consciousness of having yielded to them. They thought

⁴⁴ St. Augustine, *Expositions in Psalm 56:11*. Vol. 3,, o.c., pp. 111, 112.

they had disturbed Him, they thought they had won; but He , *though disturbed, lay down to sleep*. This ‘disturbed’ man was so placid that He slept when He wanted to. No one who is genuinely disturbed can sleep. All who suffer disturbance are either awakened from sleep, or prevented from sinking into it. Yet, this man was ‘disturbed’, and fell asleep. Great was the humility of this ‘disturbed’ man *and great the power of the sleeper*. What power enabled Him to sleep? That power of which He testified: *I have the power to lay down My life, and I have the power to take it up again. No one takes it away from Me; but I lay it down of My own accord, that I may take it up again* [cf. Jn 10:18, 17].

In this respect, **Adam was a type of Christ**. God sent a **deep sleep** upon Adam, in order to fashion **a wife for him from his side** [cf. **Gn 2:21**]. Was God unable to make a wife for the first man by taking her from his side while he was awake? Surely not. Or was it that God wanted Adam to be asleep so that he would not feel it when one of his ribs was pulled out? But who sleeps so soundly as not to be aroused if a bone is torn out? If God had power to remove a rib from a sleeping man without causing pain, he would have done so equally well when the man was awake. So why did He want to do it while Adam slept? Because in Christ’s case, a **bride was made for Him as He slept on the Cross, and made from his side. With a lance His side was struck as He hung there, and out flowed the sacraments of the Church** [cf. Jn 19:34]...⁴⁵



Exposition on Ps 65: 7⁴⁶

The Destruction of the Temple

7. Now turn your attention to the lies of false witnesses as recorded in the gospel, and see how they relate to the resurrection. They demanded of the Lord, *What sign can you show us, to justify what you are doing?* [cf. Jn 2:18]. Over and above the sin He had already given them, the sign of Jonah, He made the same point again, through a new parable, to make sure that this, His great sign, was abundantly clear. *Destroy this temple*, he said, *and in three days, I will raise it up again. They objected, This temple was forty-six years a-building: will you raise it up in three days?* Then the evangelist adds an explanation: *Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body* [cf. Jn 2:19-21]. By this simile he declared that He would manifest His power to men and women. He used the temple as a figure of His flesh, for His body was the temple of the Godhead hidden within. The Jews were accustomed to see this material temple, but they did not see its indwelling divinity.

From these words of the Lord in which He foretold His future resurrection under the image of a **rebuilt temple**, perjured witnesses concocted a lying-charge to bring against Him. When asked what they had heard Him say, they alleged: **We heard Him claim, ‘I will destroy this temple, and raise it up again after three days** [cf. Mk 15:28; Mt 26:61]. They had certainly heard Him say, **I will raise it up**

⁴⁵ cf. St. Bonaventure, *Lignum Vitae*, 29-30.

⁴⁶ St. Augustine, *Expositions in Psalm 65:7*. Vol. 3, o.c., pp. 293, f.

again after three days. But they had not heard Him say, *I will destroy it*; what they had heard was: *Destroy it*. They altered one word, or a few letters, to support their false evidence against Him. But against whom are you changing a word, O human frailty, human feebleness! You change a word against the unchangeable Word! You may well change your own word, but can you change the Word of God? In another Psalm it is justly said of you, *Iniquity has lied to itself* [cf. Ps 26 (27): 12]. Why did Your enemies tell lies against You, Lord, against You to Whom all the earth shouts with joy? **Your enemies will lie to You over your greatest act of power.** They will allege, *He said, 'I will destroy it*, when what You really said was: **'Destroy it.'** Why did they alter Your word like that? To make themselves appear innocent of the crime of destroying the temple, but a vain attempt that was.

Christ died indeed because He willed to; all the same, you killed Him. Well, all right, you liars, we grant you this much: that He did destroy the temple Himself. The apostle says of Christ: **He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me** [cf. Ga 2:20]; and of the Father He said: **He did not spare even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all** [cf. Rm 8:32]. If, then, the Father handed over His Son, and the Son handed over Himself, what part did Judas play?

What the Father did in handing His Son over to death was a good thing; what Christ did in handing Himself over for our sake was a good thing; but what Judas did in handing over His Master for gain was a very bad thing.⁴⁷ The blessings conferred on us through the Passion of Christ are in no way to be ascribed to the malice of Judas. He will be requited for his treachery, but Christ raised for His grace. Assuredly, Christ did destroy that temple; He destroyed it Himself, He Who said, **I have the power to lay down My life, and I have the power to take it up again. No one takes it from Me; but I lay it down of my own accord, and I take it up again** [cf. Jn 10:18]. He destroyed the temple by His own gracious will, but it was destroyed also by your ill-will.

Your enemies will lie to you over your greatest act of power. Yes, they lie; yes, they are believed; yes, You are roughly handled; yes, You are crucified; yes, people mock You, and shake their heads over You, saying: **If He is the son of God, let Him come down from the Cross** [cf. Mt 27:40]. Yes, You lay down Your life when You choose.

Your side is struck with a lance [cf. Jn 19:34], and the sacraments flow from Your side. You are taken down from the tree, wrapped in linen cloths, and laid in a tomb. Guards are posted there, in case Your disciples steal You away. But the hour of your resurrection comes, the earth quakes, graves are torn open, You rise again secretly and appear manifestly. Where are those liars now? Where is the false testimony they devised in their malevolence? Have your enemies not lied to You over Your greatest act of power?



⁴⁷ NB: this verb can either be used to **tradition** or of **betrayal**.

Expositions in Psalm 126: 7 ⁴⁸
Humility before Exaltation

7. Perhaps you still wanted to ask: 'When do we rise up? We are bidden to sit down now; but, when will our rising be?' Ask yourself: When was the Lord's rising up? Wait for Him Who has gone on ahead of you. If you do not wait for Him, you are wasting your labor in rising up before the light. Think now: when was Christ exalted/ After death. That means that you too must hope for your rising up after death. Hope for the rising up of all the dead, because He has risen and ascended. But where did He sleep?

On the Cross. When He slept on the Cross, His sleep was a sign; or, rather, a fulfillment of the sign given in Adam. When Adam slept, a rib was withdrawn from him [cf. Gn 2:21,f.] and Eve was created; **so it was with the Lord when He slept on the Cross, for His side was struck with a lance, and then flowed out the saving mysteries from which the Church was born. The Church is the Bride of the Lord, made from His side, as Eve was made from Adam's and as Eve could be made from the man's side only when he slept, so was the Church made only from the side of a man Who died.** And if Christ rose only after He had died, can you find exaltation, unless it be after this life?



Exposition on Ps 138: 2 ⁴⁹

Christ and the Church:
Head and Members, Two in One Flesh and One Voice

2. Now our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes speaks through the prophets in his identity as our head, for He is Christ, our Savior. He is seated at the right hand of the Father [cf. Mt 16:19], but for our sake He was also born of the Virgin and suffered under Pontius Pilate. You know how He suffered: His innocent blood was poured out as our ransom. He redeemed us, guilty prisoners that we were in the devil's clutches, and forgave us our transgressions, using His own blood, our ransom price, to blot out the record of our debt [cf. Col 2:13, f.]. He is the Ruler, the **Bridegroom** and the Redeemer of the Church.

Now, if He is the Head, obviously He must have a body. His body is holy Church, and she, in whom the apostle says: *You are Christ's body, and His members* [1 Co 12:27], is also His **Bride**. The **whole Christ**, Head and body together, constitute a perfect man. Women are included in this, for woman was formed from man and belongs with him. Of the first marriage, it was written *they will be two in one flesh* [cf. Gn 2:24] and the apostle interprets this saying in the light of the mystery, for the statement was made about these two original humans only because in them **the marriage of Christ and the Church** was prefigured.

⁴⁸ St. Augustine, *Expositions in Psalm 126:7*. Vol. 6. o.c., pp. 89, 90.

⁴⁹ St. Augustine, *Expositions in Psalm 138:2*. Vol. 6, o.c. pp. 256-257.

This is how the apostle explains it: *they will be two in one flesh. Thus is a great mystery, but I am referring it to Christ and the Church* [cf. Ep 5:31, f.] He tells us elsewhere, that Adam foreshadowed Christ: *Adam was a type of the One Who was to come* [cf. Rm 5:14]. And as Adam was a type of Christ, so, too, was **the creation of Eve from the sleeping Adam a pre-figuration of the creation of the Church from the side of the Lord as He slept**, for as He suffered and died on the Cross and **was struck by a lance**, the **sacraments** which formed the Church **flowed forth from Him** [cf. **Jn 19:34**].⁵⁰ By Christ's **sleeping** we are to understand His Passion. This image is used in another Psalm, which says in His name: *I rested and fell asleep and I arose because the Lord will uphold me* [cf. Ps 3:6 (5)]. **As Eve came from the side of the sleeping Adam, so the Church was born from the side of the suffering Christ.**

As you know our Lord Jesus Christ speaks through the prophets sometimes with His own voice, and at other times with ours, because He makes Himself one with us; as Scripture says: *They will be two in one flesh* [cf. Gn 2:24]. Indeed, the Lord referred to this Himself when, speaking about marriage in the gospel, He emphasized: *So they are two no longer, but one flesh* [cf. Mt 19:6]. **One flesh**, because Christ took flesh from our mortal stock, but not one godhead, because He is the Creator and we are creatures. Yet, **because of our union with Him**, whatever the Lord says in virtue of the fleshly nature He assumed can be taken as said both by the Head Who has now ascended into heaven, and by the members who still struggle along on their earthy pilgrimage. When Saul was persecuting Christ's earthly members, Christ cried out from heaven in the person of those suffering members: ***Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*** [cf. Ac 9:4].

Let us now listen to the Lord Jesus Christ speaking in our Psalm's prophetic words and remember that, though the Psalms were sung long before the Lord was born from Mary, they were not sung before He was the Lord. From the beginning of time, He is the Creator of all that is, but at a certain point in time He was born from a creature. Let us believe in His Godhead and understand to the best of our ability that He is equal to the Father. **But that Divine Person equal to the Father, became a sharer in our mortality, a mortality that belonged not to Him but to us, so that we might share the Divine nature that belongs not to us but to Him.**



⁵⁰ For this doctrine, compare *Exposition of Ps 56:11; 65:7; 126:7*.

St. Augustine's City of God⁵¹
[Book 22, c. 17]

Presentation:

[1] Augustine was already along in years when he began writing and was 72 when he finally finished this *old man's book*. Yet, it does not manifest any mental weakness here – he is much in charge of what he compiles here, and he is keenly aware of the war torn Roman Empire, falling apart.

[2] In other works, he tells us why he wrote it: out of zeal for God's house, against horrendous blasphemies and errors. The author himself offers this division of its content:

- **Books I – X**: the vain opinions of the City of God
- **Books XI –XXII**: this has three sub-divisions:
 - **Books XI-XIV**: The Origins of the Two Cities
 - **Books XV-XVII**: their Growth;
 - **Books XVIII-XXII**: their Purposes.

[3] There long was discussion about the category into which this work might be included:

- the Letter was a common way of expressing oneself;
- a treatise: might be a more modern understanding of this massive [1100 page] work];
- a book: Christians have always written books against non-believers: Origen wrote *Against Celsus*. It is noteworthy that St. Thomas also wrote a ***Summa Contra Gentiles***.
- a philosophical dialogue: one of the favorite recreations for intellectuals in Augustine's time was the ***philosophical weekend*** - something like a modern conference where a group of people with a specialist interest meet to listen to papers and discuss topics arising from them.

[4] This large work also is something like Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where alternative theories about the gods and various schools of philosophy are presented either for approval, or for rejection.



⁵¹ **St. Augustine. *Concerning City of God against the Pagans***. Tr. by Henry Bettenson. New Intro. by G. R. Evans. Penguin Re-print, 2003, Intro. Pp. xxxiv, ff.

Book XXII, c. 17: ⁵²

... Now in creating woman at the outset of the human race, **by taking a rib from the side of the sleeping man, the Creator must have intended by this act, a prophecy of Christ and His Church.** The sleep of that man clearly stood for the death of Christ; **and Christ's side, as He hung lifeless on the Cross, was pierced by a lance.** And **from the wound their flowed blood and water** [cf. Jn19:34], which we recognize as **the sacraments by which the Church is built up.** This, in fact, is the precise word used in Scripture of woman's creation; it says not that God 'formed', or 'fashioned' a woman, but that 'He built it [the rib] up into a woman.' [cf. Gn 2:21]. Hence, the Apostle also speaks of the 'building up' of the Body of Christ, which is the Church [cf. Ep 4:11]. The woman, then, is the creation of God, just as is the man; but her creation out of man emphasizes the idea of the unity between them; and in the manner of that creation there is, as I have said, a foreshadowing of Christ and His Church ...



St. Augustine's Classical Text ⁵³

... The Evangelist used a careful word in order not to say he struck his side or wounded it, or anything else except he opened it, so that in a certain way might be opened **the Door of Life**, from which the sacraments of the Church flowed forth without which one does not enter that life which is true life. That blood has beenpured out for the remission of sins.

That water blends in with the saving cup this '[water] furnishes both the **bath** and the **drink**.

This was foretold when **Noah** was commanded to make a door in the side of the Ark [Gn 6:16], by which **door** the animals migdhtenter which were not to perish in the flood and by which the Church is prefigured.

Because of this the first woman was made form the side of the sleeping man [Gn 2:22] and was called **life** and **mother of the living** [Gn 3:20]. Certainly this signified great good before the great evil of sin.

This Second Adam, having bowed His head, slept on the Cross so that His **Spouse** might be formed from that which flowed from the side of the One sleeping...



⁵² This is the final Book of St. Augutine's work cited above, c. 17, pp. 1057, ff.

⁵³ Tractatus in Ioannis Evangelium, 120 – cited by Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background*. o.c, pp. 263, f.

St. Thomas Aquinas

Presentation:

[1] As St. Augustine was cited in Vatican II for his use of **Jn 19:34**, St. Thomas makes rather abundant use of the phrase, ***ex latere Christi*** - and its symbolism, and will also be quoted in this connection. As will be noted he presents a rather wide array of interpretations of what precisely is 'opened up' in the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ.

[2] Once and for all, as it is often noted, St. Thomas – like the science of his day – had a primitive idea regarding the infusion of the soul in women and also their situation in relationship with men. It might be good to ponder these words of a recent, life-long student of the Angelic Doctor, in of our times, **Pope John Paul II** authoritatively stated the teaching of the Church in his Apostolic Letter, ***Mulieris Dignitatem***, August 15, 1988:

III. The Image and Likeness of God: The Book of Genesis

6: Let us enter into the setting of the biblical 'beginning'. In it the revealed truth concerning man as 'the image and likeness' of God constitutes the immutable *basis of all Christian anthropology*. 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: **male and female he created them**' [Gn 1:27]. This concise passage contains the fundamental anthropological truths: man is the highpoint of the whole order of creation in the visible world; the human race, which takes its origin from the calling into existence of man and woman, crowns the whole work of creation; **both men and women are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God's image.** This image and likeness of God, which is **essential for the human being**, is passed on by the man and woman, as spouses and parents, to their descendants: 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.' [Gn 1:28]. The Creator entrusts dominion over the earth to the human race, to all persons, to **all men and women, who derive their dignity and vocation from the common beginning.**'

In the book of Genesis we find another description of the creation of man – man and woman [cf. 2: 18-25] – to which we shall refer shortly. At this point, however, we can say that the biblical account puts forth truth about the personal character of the human being. **Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.** What makes man like God is the fact that – unlike the whole world of other living creatures, including those endowed with senses - man is also a rational being. Thanks to this property, **man and woman are able to 'dominate' the other creatures of the visible world** [cf. Gn 1:28].

The second description of the creation of man [cf. Gn 2:18-25] makes use of **different language** to express the truth about the creation of man, and especially of woman. **In a sense the language is less precise, and, on might say, more descriptive and metaphorical** – closer to the language of the myths known at the time. Nevertheless, we find no essential contradiction between the two texts. The text of Gn 2:18-25 helps us to understand better what we find in the concise passage of Gn 1:27-28. At the same time, if it is read together with the latter, *it helps us to understand even more profoundly*, the fundamental truth which it contains *concerning man, created as man and woman in the image and likeness of God.*

In the description found in Gn 2:18-25, the woman is created by God 'from the rib' of the man and is **placed at his side as another 'I'** – as **the companion of the man**, who is alone in the surrounding world of living creatures and who finds in none of them a helper suitable for himself. Called into existence in this way, the woman is immediately recognized by the man as 'flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones' [cf. Gn 2:23], and for this very reason she is called 'woman.' **In biblical language this name indicates her essential identity with regard to man** - *is-issah* – something which unfortunately modern languages in general are unable to express: 'She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.' [Gn 2:23]

The biblical text provides sufficient bases for recognizing the essential equality of man and woman from the point of view of their humanity. From the very beginning both are persons, unlike the other living beings in the world about them. **The woman is another 'I' in a common humanity.** From the very beginning they appear as a 'unity of the two' and this signifies that the original solitude is overcome, the solitude in which man does not find a 'helper for him' [Gn 2:20]. Is it not only a question here of a 'helper' in activity, in 'subduing the earth' [cf. Gn 2:28]? Certainly it **is a matter of life's companion, with whom as a wife, the man can unite himself becoming with her 'one flesh'**, and for this reason leaving 'his father and mother' [cf. Gn 2:24]. Thus, in the same context as the creation of man and woman, the biblical account speaks of God's instituting marriage as an indispensable condition for the transmission of life to new generations, the transmission of life to which marriage and conjugal love are by their very nature ordered: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.' [Gn 1:28]...



[3] **St. Thomas Aquinas** made relatively abundant use of the image of [Gn 2:21; **Jn 19:34**], which he studied as **ex lateri Christ : from the side of Christ** – that might be presented in the following order:

1. **In a General Manner**: in the broad use made of the image, St. Thomas offers these in a general manner:

a. **The question of Relics**:

All the blood which flowed from Christ's body, belonging as it does to the integrity of human nature, rose again with His body: and the same reason holds good for all the particles which belong to the truth and the integrity of human nature. But the blood preserved as relics in some churches did not flow from Christ's side but is said to have flowed from some maltreated image of Christ.⁵⁴

b. **The Physical make-up of Christ's Body**:

Since the mixing of water with the wine is not necessary for the sacrament, it does not matter as to the essence of the sacrament, what kind of water is added to the wine, whether natural water, or artificial, as rose-water, although, as to the propriety of the sacrament, he would sin who mixes any other than natural and true

⁵⁴ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 54 a. 3 ad 3**: Et eadem ratio est de omnibus particulis ad veritatem et integritatem humanae naturae pertinentibus. Sanguis autem ille qui in quibusdam Ecclesiis pro reliquiis observatur, non fluxit de **latere Christi**, sed miraculose dicitur effluxisse de quadam imagine Christi percussa.

water because the water flowed from the side of Christ hanging on the cross, and not phlegm, as some have said, in order to show that Christ's body was truly composed of the four elements; as by the flowing blood, it was shown to be composed of the four humors, as Pope Innocent III says in a certain Decree. But, because of the mixing of water with flour is essential to the sacrament, as making the composition of bread, if rose-water, or any other liquor besides true water, be mixed with the flour, the sacrament would not be valid, because it would not be true bread.⁵⁵

c. The Physical Death of Christ presented in the celebration of Mass:

During Mass, the celebrant makes three signs of the Cross in the Canon over these words: per ipsum, et in ipso, et cum ipso, to symbolize the space of three hours that passed according to the crucifixion, by which Jesus was crucified by the soldiers at the 6th hour; or these three might symbolize the three lessons of the Crucified: ***passion, pro-passion, compassion***.

Then the celebrant makes two other signs of the cross over the chalice at these words: est tibi Deo patri omnipotenti in unitate spiritus sancti omnis honor et Gloria to represent the separation of the soul from the body, which occurred at the 9th hour; or to symbolize the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ. The bows made by the priest indicate the obedience of Christ toward His Father, from which He sustained death.⁵⁶

Various Thoughts concerning Women [keeping in mind what is noted above in ***Mulieris Dignitatem***, n. 7 regarding equality of men and women]:

- their Production:

... it was right for the woman to be made from a rib of man. **First, to signify the social union of man and woman**, for the woman should neither use *authority over man*, and so she was not made from his head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man's contempt as his slave, and so she was not made from his feet.

⁵⁵ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 74 a. 7 ad 3:** Ad tertium dicendum quod, quia admixtio aquae ad vinum non est de necessitate sacramenti, non refert, quantum ad necessitatem sacramenti, quaecumque aqua misceatur vino, sive naturalis sive artificialis, ut rosacea. Quamvis, quantum ad convenientiam sacramenti, peccet qui aliam aquam miscet nisi naturalem et veram, quia de **latere Christi** pendentis in cruce vera aqua profluxit, non humor phlegmaticus, ut quidam dixerunt, ad ostendendum quod corpus Christi erat vere compositum ex quatuor elementis; sicut per sanguinem fluentem ostendebatur quod erat compositum ex quatuor humoribus; ut Innocentius III dicit in quadam decretali. Quia vero admixtio aquae ad farinam est de necessitate huius sacramenti, utpote constituens substantiam panis; si farinae admisceretur aqua rosacea, vel quicumque alius liquor quam vera aqua, non posset ex eo confici sacramentum, quia non est vere panis.

⁵⁶ **Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 12 q. 3 a. 2 qc. 3 expos.** : Septimo iterum facit tres super illud: *per ipsum, et in ipso, et cum ipso*, ad repraesentandum secundam crucifixionem, qua a militibus hora sexta post trium horarum spatium crucifixus est; vel ad repraesentandum tres ejus cruciatus, scilicet **passionis, propassionis, compassionis**. Deinde facit duas extra calicem super illud: *est tibi Deo patri omnipotenti in unitate spiritus sancti omnis honor et gloria*, **ad repraesentandum separationem animae a corpore**, quae facta est hora nona; vel propter sanguinem et aquam, quae de **latere Christi** profluxerunt. Inclinationes etiam factae a sacerdote, **signant Christi obedientiam ad patrem**, ex qua mortem sustinuit

Secondly, for the **sacramental signification**: **for from the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross the Sacraments flowed** – namely blood and water – on which the Church was established ...⁵⁷

- **their imagined inferiority**: this line of reasoning is far surpassed by the teaching of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 7, cited at length above. These two texts are St. Thomas Commentary on 1 Co 11:6, f.: **...let her cover her head. The man indeed ought not to cover his head: because he is the image and glory of God. But, the woman is the glory of man ...** From these texts St. Thomas draws the harsh conclusions that both by interior and exterior features a man would be superior.⁵⁸ This happens again in Thomas' commentary on Isaiah 60:16: **And thou shalt suck the milk of the gentiles...** - the sons will be 'stronger' and the daughters 'weaker', in the unity of the Church, but all, like the sacraments **emanate from the side of Christ opened on the Cross.**⁵⁹

2. **Scripture – the Heart of Christ - were opened with the Passion:**⁶⁰ in commenting on the abandonment of Christ by His Father, St. Thomas develops these lines of Ps 21 (22): v. 15: **... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are scattered.** These are his comments:⁶¹

⁵⁷ **Summa Theologiae I, q. 92 a. 3 co.:** Neque debet a viro despici, tanquam serviliter subiecta, et ideo non est formata de pedibus. Secundo, propter sacramentum, quia de **latere Christi** dormientis in cruce ...

Super I Cor., cap. 11 vs. 7: Primo quidem quantum ad dignitatem principii: cum enim imago sit expressa similitudo eius cuius est imago, vir in hoc dicitur imago Dei quod sicut Deus est principium omnium rerum, ita vir est principium totius humani generis, Act. XLIII (XVII 26): *produxit ex uno* etc. Secundo quantum ad Christum: sicut enim ex **latere Christi** in cruce dormientis profluxit sanguis et aqua per quae instituta sunt sacramenta per quae salvatur Ecclesia, ita ex latere viri soporati et dormientis extracta est costa de qua formata est mulier. Tertio quantum ad interiorem imaginem, secundum quam etiam in viro praepollet imago Dei: nam viri sapientiores et fortiores sunt mulieribus, Prov. ult. *mulierem fortem quis* etc. Eccl. VII: *virum de mille unum reperi* etc.

⁵⁸ **Super I Cor., cap. 11 vs. 7:** ...Primo quidem quantum ad dignitatem principii: cum enim imago sit expressa similitudo eius cuius est imago, vir in hoc dicitur imago Dei quod sicut Deus est principium omnium rerum, ita vir est principium totius humani generis, Act. XLIII (XVII 26): *produxit ex uno* etc. Secundo quantum ad Christum: sicut enim ex **latere Christi** in cruce dormientis profluxit sanguis et aqua per quae instituta sunt sacramenta per quae salvatur Ecclesia, ita ex latere viri soporati et dormientis extracta est costa de qua formata est mulier. Tertio quantum ad interiorem imaginem, secundum quam etiam in viro praepollet imago Dei: nam viri sapientiores et fortiores sunt mulieribus, Prov. ult. *mulierem fortem quis* etc. Eccl. VII: *virum de mille unum reperi* etc.

Super I Cor., cap. 11 l. 2. :...Non ergo magis debet dici, quod vir dicitur imago Dei, quam mulier. Dicendum est autem, quod vir dicitur hic specialiter imago Dei secundum quaedam exteriora, scilicet quia vir est principium totius sui generis, sicut Deus est principium totius universi, et quia de **latere Christi** dormientis in cruce fluxerunt sacramenta sanguinis et aquae, a quibus fabricata est Ecclesia. Potest etiam quantum ad interiora dici, quod vir specialius dicitur imago Dei secundum mentem, inquantum in eo ratio magis viget.

⁵⁹ **Super Isaiam, cap. 60:** Vel referendum est ad congregationem diversarum gentium sub unitate Ecclesiae. *Filii*, in fide fortiores, *filiae*, debiliores, de **latere, Christi** in cruce aperto, unde sacramenta salutis emanaverunt. Vel *lac sugent*, rudioris doctrinae.

⁶⁰ **CCC # 112.**

⁶¹ **Thomas d'Aquin. Commentaire su les Psaumes.** Tr. Par Jean-Eric Stroobant de Saint-Eloy, OSB. Preface par Mark D. Jordan. Paris: du Cerf 1996, pp. 267, f.

... The phrase, 'the heart of Christ' can refer to sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scriptures were 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 ...⁶²

3. The 'Birth' of the Church:

a. The 'Sleep' of the Cross: this reading of St. Thomas is based on the Vulgate of Ps 3:6: *I have slept and taken my rest; and I have risen up, because the Lord has protected me.* This is St. Thomas' commentary:

... this means I have slept profoundly. Indeed, it is said that Christ slept profoundly, because He handed Himself over spontaneously to His Passion; and because He slept, death followed. This is because He passed over from ordinary sleep to one that was more profound. This sleep is prefigured by that of Adam: *Then, the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam...* [Gn 2:21] For the Church was formed by the side of the dead Christ on the Cross.⁶³ And he says further: *and I have risen up*, i.e. by my own power. *I have the power to lay down my life and take it up again...* [Jn 10:18].⁶⁴

Consecration of the Church by the Eucharist:

... both pertain to the Eucharist, because in the sacrament of the Eucharist water is mixed in with the wine; even though the water does not pertain to the substance of the sacrament. All of this pertain to the figure: because just as from the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross, blood and water flowed out, by which the Church is consecrated; so, from the side of the sleeping Adam the first woman was formed, who prefigured the Church. Precisely here is posited the certitude of the narration, and first because it is from the apostolic witness; and secondly, from this prophecy of Scripture: *And these were accomplished so that the Scripture might be fulfilled...*⁶⁵

c. Eve ... Jesus ... Church:

... and there are other comparisons between Christ and Adam, as just as the body of Adam was formed without sexual intercourse, so the body of Christ was formed of a Virgin. And just as from the side of the sleeping Adam the woman was taken, so

⁶² Per 'cor Christi' intelligitur sacra Scriptura, quae manifestat cor Christi. Hoc autem erat clausum ante passionem, quae erat obscura: sed aperta est post passionem quia eam iam intelligentes considerant, et discernunt quomodo prophetiae sint exponendae...

⁶³ cf. I, q. 92. a. 3; III, q. 64, a. 2 ad 3 m; 4 Sent. D. 18, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 1; Super Io., 19:34, n. 2458.

⁶⁴ Super Psalmo 3, n. 3: Iste sopor signatur in sopore Adam. Gen. 2: *immisit dominus soporem in Adam* etc. quia de latere Christi in cruce mortui formata est Ecclesia. Ait ergo, *et exsurrexi*, propria scilicet virtute: Joan. 10: *potestatem habeo ponendi animam meam, et potestatem habeo iterum sumendi eam.*

⁶⁵ Super Io., cap. 19 l. 5. : Vel utrumque pertinet ad Eucharistiam, quia in sacramento Eucharistiae miscetur aqua cum vino; quamvis aqua non sit de substantia sacramenti. Competit etiam hoc figurae: quia sicut de latere Christi dormientis in cruce fluxit sanguis et aqua, quibus consecratur Ecclesia; ita de latere Adae dormientis formata est mulier, quae ipsam Ecclesiam praefigurabat. Hic ponitur certitudo narrationis, et primo ex apostolico testimonio; secundo ex Scripturae vaticinio, ibi *facta sunt enim haec ut Scriptura impleatur.*

from the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross there flowed blood and water, as is said in Jn 19:34, which signify the sacraments from which the Church is formed ...⁶⁶

d. **Jesus is the New Moses: Water cleanses, Blood redeems:** quoting Mt 26: 27, ff., these 'Sentences' from the early Church were applied by St. Thomas to the interpretation of these verses:

... Ambrose: if Melchisedech offered bread and wine, what means this mixing of water? Hear the reason. Moses struck the rock and the rock gave forth abundance of water, but that rock was Christ. Also one of the soldiers with his spear pierced Christ's side and out of His side flowed water and blood, the water to cleanse, the blood to redeem. Remigius.⁶⁷

4. **The Sacraments in General:** it is here that St. Thomas makes his most frequent application of Jn 19:34:

a. **The Church is 'saved' by the Sacraments:**

St. Thomas quotes the Vulgate version of Rm 5:14: ... ***after the similitude of the transgression of Adam, a figure of the One to come*** ... - and where sin abounds, grace super-abounds in Christ and states: the sacraments flowed forth **from the side of Christ,** through which the Church is saved... both water and blood flowed forth...⁶⁸ This same verse from Romans is also quoted by the Angelic Doctor in his Summa, to show this same reasoning:

...On the contrary, On Rm 5:14: ***After the similitude of the transgression of Adam, etc.,*** the Gloss says: '**From the side of Christ asleep on the cross, flowed the sacraments which brought salvation to the Church.**' Consequently, it seems that the sacraments derive their power from Christ's Passion.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ **Super Rom., cap. 5 l. 4:** Sunt autem et aliae similitudines inter Christum et Adam, quod scilicet sicut corpus Adae formatum fuit sine coitu, ita et corpus Christi de virgine. Et sicut de latere Adae dormientis sumpta est mulier, ita ex **latere Christi** dormientis in cruce fluxit sanguis et aqua, ut dicitur Io. XIX, 34, quae significant sacramenta quibus est formata Ecclesia.

⁶⁷ **Catena in Mt., cap. 26 l. 8:** Accipe rationem. Tetigit Moyses petram, et petra undam maximam fudit; petra autem erat Christus, et unus de militibus lancea tetigit **latus Christi**, et de latere eius aqua fluxit et sanguis; **aqua ut mundaret, sanguis ut redimeret.** Remigius. [NB: the English translation, cf. **St. Thomas Aquinas. Catena Aurea. Commentary on the Four Gospels collected out of the Works of the Fathers.** Vol. I, Part III. St. Matthew. Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock 2005, p 896].

⁶⁸ **Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 1 q. 1 a. 4 qc. 3 s.c. 1:** Sed contra, Rom. 5, super illud: *similitudinem praevaricationis Adae*, dicit Glossa: ex **latere Christi** profluxerunt **sacramenta** per quae salvata est Ecclesia. Hoc autem factum est in passione.

Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 3 q. 1 a. 3 qc. 1 arg. 6: Praeterea, **sacramenta de latere Christi** fluxerunt. Sed sicut fluxit aqua, sic et sanguis

⁶⁹ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 62 a. 5 s.c.:** Sed contra est quod, super illud Rom. V, *in similitudinem praevaricationis Adae* etc. dicit Glossa, ex **latere Christi** dormientis fluxerunt **sacramenta**, per quae salvata est Ecclesia. Sic ergo videntur sacramenta virtutem habere ex passione Christi.

b. The Apostles are God's Vicars for the Church built on the Sacraments:

The apostles and their successors are God's Vicars in governing the Church which is built on faith and the sacraments of faith. Wherefore, just as they may not institute another Church, so neither may they deliver another faith, nor institute other sacraments: on the contrary, the Church is said to be built up with the sacraments which **flowed from the side of Christ, while hanging on the Cross.**⁷⁰

5. The Sacraments in Particular:

Both Baptism and Eucharist:⁷¹

- **Sponsal Union with the Passion of Christ** [the Church as the Bride of Christ in Vatican II: **SC 7; 47; 84; 85**; Christ as Bridegroom: **SC 84; 102**]:

... Wherefore it is manifest that the sacraments of the Church derive their power specially from Christ's Passion, the virtue of which is in a manner **united** to us by our receiving the sacraments. It was in sign of this that **from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross there flowed water and blood**, the former of which belongs to **Baptism**, the latter to the **Eucharist**, which are the principal sacraments.⁷²

- **Washing, Redeeming:**

Water flowed from Christ's side to wash us; blood, to redeem us. Wherefore, blood belongs to the sacrament of the Eucharist, while water belongs to the sacrament of Baptism. Yet, this latter sacrament derives its cleansing virtue from the power of Christ's blood.⁷³

- **Configuration to the Death of Christ:** commenting on the text from Rv 1:5: ***Jesus Christ has loved us and washed us in His own blood...*** - St. Thomas comments on Paul's classical text from Rm 6 on Baptism:

... this is why **from the side of Christ, suspended on the Cross**, there flowed after His death the blood and water, as is reported in the Gospel of John 19:34. Therefore as we are conformed into His Death, in so far as we have died to sin, in that which

⁷⁰ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 64 a. 2 ad 3:** Ad tertium dicendum quod apostoli, et eorum successores, sunt vicarii Dei quantum ad regimen Ecclesiae institutae per fidem et fidei sacramenta. Unde, sicut non licet eis constituere aliam Ecclesiam, ita non licet eis tradere aliam fidem, neque instituere alia sacramenta, sed per sacramenta quae de ***latere Christi*** pendentes in cruce fluxerunt, dicitur esse ***fabricata Ecclesia Christi***.

⁷¹ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 66 a. 3 arg. 3:** Praeterea, sacramenta Ecclesiae fluxerunt de ***latere Christi*** pendentes in cruce, ut supra dictum est. Sed inde fluxit non solum aqua, sed etiam sanguis.

⁷² **Summa Theologiae III, q. 62 a. 5 co.:** Unde manifestum est quod sacramenta Ecclesiae specialiter habent virtutem ex passione Christi, cuius virtus quodammodo nobis copulatur per susceptionem sacramentorum. In cuius signum, de ***latere Christi*** pendentes in cruce fluxerunt aqua et sanguis, quorum unum pertinet ad ***Baptismum***, aliud ad ***Eucharistiam***, quae sunt potissima sacramenta.

⁷³ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 66 a. 3 arg. 3:** Praeterea, sacramenta Ecclesiae fluxerunt de ***latere Christi*** pendentes in cruce, ut supra dictum est. Sed inde fluxit non solum aqua, sed etiam sanguis.

was found to be the likeness of sin, even though He was without sin. So, all of us who have been baptized, we are dead to sin.⁷⁴

Emphasis on Baptism:

- with a quote from Peter's Baptismal Homily [cf. 1 P 1:2]:

... In response to the 6th objection it is said that **blood and water flowed from the side of Christ**; but blood is for redeeming, as it is stated in 1 P 1:2, and water is for washing; and therefore water is more competent for Baptism, that is blood...⁷⁵

- the precise use of water:

Objection 2: Further, the water which **flowed from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross** was a figure of Baptism, as stated above. But, that water seemingly was not pure, because the elements do not exist actually in a mixed body, such as Christ's therefore it seems that pure or plain water is not necessary for Baptism.

Reply Obj. 3: The water which **flowed from the side of Christ** hanging on the Cross, was not the phlegmatic humor as some have supposed. For a liquid of this kind cannot be used for Baptism, as neither can the blood of an animal, or wine, or any liquid extracted from plants. It was pure water gushing forth miraculously like the blood from a dead body, to prove the reality of our lord's body, and confute the error of the Manichees; water, which is one of the four elements, showing Christ's body to be composed of the four elements: blood, proving that it was composed of the four humors.⁷⁶

- Emphasis on the Eucharist:

- into the Mouth of the faithful:

... To this second question it is to be responded that always, the one who consecrates, ought to receive the body and the blood of the Lord, unless he be impeded by violence, or by death, or by infirmity, or for some other like reason: the

⁷⁴ **Super Rom., cap. 6 l. 1.:** Apoc. I, 5: *lavit nos a peccatis nostris*. Unde de **latere Christi** pendentis in cruce post mortem fluxit sanguis et aqua, ut dicitur Io. XIX, 34. Sicut igitur eius morti configuramur, in quantum peccato morimur, sic ipse mortuus est vitae mortali, in qua erat similitudo peccati, licet non esset ibi peccatum. [NB: cf. **Thomas d'Aquin. Commentaire de l'Épître aux Romains.** Suivie de Lettre a Bernard Ayglier, Abbe' de Monte Cassin. Paris: du Cerf, 1999, p. 246. For **Jn 19:34**, the footnote provided adds parallel places for St. Thomas' Commentary: III, q. 51, a. 1; q. 66, a. 8; 4 Sent. d. 3, q. 1, a. 4, ql 2, 3; d.23, q. 1, a. 1, q. 2.]

⁷⁵ **Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 3 q. 1 a. 3 qc. 1 ad 6:** Ad sextum dicendum, quod ex latere Christi fluxit sanguis et aqua; sed sanguis ad redimendum, ut dicitur 1 Petr. 1, aqua autem ad abluendum; et ideo aqua Baptismo competit, et non sanguis.

⁷⁶ **Summa Theologiae III, q. 66 a. 4 arg. 3:** Praeterea, aqua fluens de **latere Christi** pendentis in cruce fuit significativa Baptismi, ut dictum est. Sed aqua illa non videtur fuisse aqua pura, eo quod in corpore mixto, cuiusmodi fuit corpus Christi, non sunt elementa in actu...

Summa Theologiae III, q. 66 a. 4 ad 3: Ad tertium dicendum quod aqua fluens de **latere Christi** pendentis in cruce non fuit humor phlegmaticus, ut quidam dixerunt. In tali enim humore non posset fieri Baptismus, sicut nec in sanguine animalis, aut in vino, aut in quocumque liquore alicuius plantae.

reason of this can be taken from the part of the Sacrament itself, in that it is in its very reception that it receives the completion of its meaning. Because, as Augustine says, when the blood from the chalice is poured into the mouth of believers, there is designated the **outpouring of the blood from the side of Christ**: and also the complement of its efficacy, because the ultimate proper effect of the sacrament is had in that it is consumed. Therefore, in order for this sacrament to be perfect, it is necessary for the one who has celebrated this sacrament, is to receive ...⁷⁷

- **proper rubrics**: in discussing 1 Co 11:25, 26, St. Thomas [nn. 684, 685] enters into the 'theology' behind the rubrics:

... For after the consecration, nothing can be mixed into the blood of Christ, because any such mixture cannot take place without there being some kind of corruption of the consecrated wine, which would pertain to the crime of sacrilege. Certain ones say that **since blood and water flowed out of the side of Christ hanging on the Cross**, as is read in Jn 19:34, just as the wine is converted into the blood [of Christ], so the water is converted into the water [that flowed at the same time]. But, this does not stand up, because in the water there is figured the ablution which is through Baptism...⁷⁸

- **the drop of water symbolized the People of Redemption**:

- **the people in need of redemption**:

... To the third objection it must be responded that nothing remaining under the same species is a sign of itself; but, something according to which it is in one species, may be a sign of itself in so far as it is under another species; and in like manner it should be stated in the matter at hand **that water flowing out from the side of Christ** figured the people, who is to be redeemed and to be refashioned by His blood; and therefore, water having been mixed in with the blood signified the use of this sacrament...⁷⁹

⁷⁷ **Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 12 q. 3 a. 2 qc. 2 co.**: Ad secundam quaestionem dicendum, quod semper ille qui consecrat, debet sumere corpus et sanguinem Christi, nisi impediatur vel per violentiam, vel per mortem, vel per infirmitatem, vel aliquid hujusmodi: cujus ratio potest sumi ex parte ipsius sacramenti, quod in ipsa sumptione complementum suae significationis accipit: quia, ut dicit Augustinus, dum **sanguis in ore fidelium de calice funditur**, sanguinis effusio de **latere Christi** designatur: et etiam **complementum** suae efficaciae, quia ultimum effectum proprium habet in hoc quod sumitur. Ut ergo sacramentum sit perfectum, oportet illum qui sacramentum celebravit, communicare.

⁷⁸ **Super I Cor., cap. 11 l. 6**: Nihil enim post consecrationem est sanguini Christi miscendum quia talis permixtio non posset esse sine qualicumque corruptione vini consecrati, quod pertinet ad crimen sacrilegii. Dicunt autem quidam quod cum de **latere Christi** pendentis in cruce fluxerit sanguis et aqua, ut legitur Io. XIX, 34, sicut vinum convertitur in sanguinem, ita aqua in aquam. Sed hoc non competit, quia in illa aqua figuratur ablutio quae est per Baptismum.

⁷⁹ **Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 8 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 2 ad 3**: Ad tertium dicendum, quod nihil sub eadem specie manens est signum sui ipsius; sed aliquid secundum quod est in una specie, potest esse signum sui secundum quod est sub alia specie; et similiter est in proposito dicendum, quod **aqua** fluens de **latere Christi** figurabat **populum**, qui ejus **sanguine** redimendus et reficiendus erat; et **ideo significabat aqua sanguini admixta hujus sacramenti usum**.

- the union of this People to be redeemed with Christ:

... Secondly, because it harmonizes with the representation of our Lord's Passion: hence, Pope Alexander says: 'In the Lord's chalice neither wine only, nor water only ought to be offered, but both mixed, because we read that both **flowed from His side in the Passion.**'

Thirdly, because this is adapted for signifying the effected of this sacrament, since as Pope Julius says: 'We see that the people are signified by the water, but Christ's blood by the wine. Therefore, when water is mixed with the wine in the chalice, the people is made one with Christ.'⁸⁰

- the ablution of the People's sins participating in this sacrament:

...Now the adding of water to the wine is for the purpose of signifying the sharing of this sacrament by the faithful, in this respect that by the mixing of the water with the wine is signified the union of the people with Christ, as stated. Moreover, **the flowing water from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross** refers to the same, because by the water is denoted the cleansing effect from sins, which was **the effect of Christ's Passion**. Now it was observed above [q. 73, a. 1, ad 3 m] that this sacrament is completed in the consecration of the matter; while the usage of the faithful is not essential to the sacrament, but only a consequence thereof. Consequently, then, the adding of water is not essential to the sacrament.⁸¹



A Few Concluding Applications

[1] A Mystery to be adored by the veneration of *Iatriae* :

Whether water should be added in Great Quantity?

Objection 1: It seems that water ought to be added in great quantity, because **as blood flowed sensibly from Christ's side, so did water**. Hence, it is written [Jn 19:35]: **He that saw it, has given testimony**. But water could not be sensibly present in this sacrament except were it used in great quantity...

⁸⁰ Summa Theologiae III, q. 74 a. 6 co. : Secundo, quia hoc convenit repraesentationi dominicae passionis. Unde dicit Alexander Papa, *non debet in calice domini aut vinum solum, aut aqua sola offerri, sed utrumque permixtum, quia utrumque ex latere Christi in passione sua profluxisse legitur*. Tertio, quia hoc convenit ad significandum effectum huius sacramenti, qui est **unio populi Christiani ad Christum**, quia, ut Iulius Papa dicit, *videmus in aqua populum intelligi, in vino vero ostendi sanguinem Christi*.

⁸¹ Summa Theologiae III, q. 74 a. 7 co.: Appositio autem aquae ad vinum refertur ad significandum participationem huius sacramenti a fidelibus, quantum ad hoc quod per aquam mixtam vino significatur populus adunatus Christo, ut dictum est. Sed et hoc ipsum quod de **latere Christi** pendentis in cruce aqua profluxit, ad idem refertur, quia per aquam significabatur **ablutio peccatorum**, quae fiebat per passionem Christi. Dictum est autem supra quod hoc sacramentum perficitur in consecratione materiae, usus autem fidelium non est de necessitate sacramenti, sed est aliquid consequens ad sacramentum.

*On the contrary, ... Ambrose says in *De Officiis* : ‘Before the blessing it is another species that is named, after the blessing the Body is signified’; otherwise, it would not be adored with the adoration of latria. And therefore, others have said that as the wine is changed into blood, so the water is changed into **the water which flowed from Christ’s side**. But this cannot be maintained reasonably ...*⁸²

[2] The Effect of the Passion of Christ: quoting **Mt 26:26-28**, on the Institution of the Eucharist, St. Thomas again quote Jn 19:34:

... In warm lands, the custom is that one would not drink wine without water: therefore it is not believed that Christ would have confected the sacrament in pure wine. This is but proper and no problem, because that sacrament is commemorative of the Lord’s Passion; but, **from the side of Christ there flowed blood and water**, as is had in **Jn 19:34**. And so this was done to signify the effects, and this in two ways: because this does signify the memorial of the Passion of Christ; therefore it brings to us the effect of the Passion of Christ . The effect is two-fold: to wash and to redeem...⁸³

[3] The very Foundations of the Church’s Faith, Hope and Love: this thought is taken from the very last page of St. Thomas’ *Gold Chain* of St. Luke 24:50:⁸⁴

...Bede: Having omitted all those things which may have taken place during forty three days between our Lord and His disciples, St. Luke silently joins to the first day of the resurrection, the last day, when He ascended into heaven, saying: **And He led them out as far as Bethany**.

First, indeed because of the name of the place, which signifies’ the House of Obedience’. For He Who descended because of the disobedience of the wicked, ascended because of the obedience of the converted.

Next, because of the situation of the same village, which is said to be placed on the side of the mount of Olives; because He has placed the foundations, as it were, of the House of the Obedient Church of faith, hope, and love, **in the side of that highest mountain, namely Christ**. But He blessed them to whom He had

⁸² **Summa Theologiae III, q. 74 a. 8 arg. 1:** Videtur quod debeat aqua in magna quantitate apponi. Sicut enim sanguis de **latere Christi** sensibiliter fluxit, ita et aqua, unde dicitur Ioan. XIX, *qui vidit, testimonium perhibuit*. Sed aqua non posset sensibiliter esse in hoc sacramento nisi in magna quantitate poneretur....

Summa Theologiae III, q. 74 a. 8 co. : ... Alioquin non adoraretur veneratione latriae. Et ideo alii dixerunt quod, sicut vinum convertitur in sanguinem, ita aqua convertitur in aquam quae de **latere Christi** fluxit. Sed hoc non rationabiliter dici potest...

⁸³ **Super Mt. [rep. Leodegarii Bissuntini], cap. 26 l. 4 (n. 2193):** Sed in terra calida consuetudo est quod non bibatur vinum sine aqua; ideo non est credendum quod in puro vino confecerit. Competit et contento, quia illud sacramentum est rememorativum dominicae passionis; sed a **latere Christi** exivit sanguis et aqua, ut habetur Io. XIX, 34. Item ad significandum effectus, et hoc dupliciter: quia istud significat memoriam passionis Christi; ergo inducit in nos effectus passionis Christi.

⁸⁴ **St. Thomas Aquinas. Catena Aurea. Commentary on the Four Gospels collected out of the Works of the Fathers. Vol. III, Part II, St. Luke.** Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock 2005, p. 793.

delivered the precepts of His teaching; hence, it follows, ***And He lifted up His hands and blessed them ...***⁸⁵

[4] Broad Symbolism:

... to the second question, it should be stated, that something can be figured in two ways.

In one way, through that which is both a sign and a cause: and in this manner, **the pouring forth of blood and water from the side of Christ** was a figure of this sacrament.

In another manner, through that which is a sign only;

and so, for that which is the sacrament only in the Eucharist, it was the oblation of Melchisedech in His figure;

and in so far as it is both reality and sacrament, i.e., the suffering Christ Himself, it was in figure the Paschal Lamb;

and in so far it is the reality only, i.e., grace, it was the sign of the manna, which fed, having every taste of sweetness within.⁸⁶

[5] The Open Side and the Gate of Heaven:⁸⁷

But Christ by His Passion opened the gates and recalled the exiles to the kingdom. For when Christ's side was pierced, the Gates of Paradise were opened, and by the shedding of His Blood the stain of sin was wiped away, God was appeased, man's weakness was removed, his punishment was expiated, and the exiles were called back to the kingdom. Hence, the thief received the immediate response: ***this day you shall be with Me in Paradise*** [Lk 23:43]. This has not been said of old –not to Adam, not to Abraham, not to David. But, ***this day*** [i.e. as soon as the gates were opened] the thief having sought pardon, found it. ***Having ...***

⁸⁵ Catena in Lc., cap. 24 l. 7: *Primo quidem propter nomen civitatis, quae domus obedientiae dicitur: qui enim propter inobedientiam perversorum descendit, propter obedientiam conversorum ascendit. Deinde propter situm eiusmodi villae, quae in latere montis olivarum posita esse narratur: quia videlicet obedientis Ecclesiae domus in ipsius summi montis, idest in Christi, latere, fidei, spei dilectionisque suae fundamenta locavit. Eos autem benedixit, quibus praecepta docendi tradiderat; unde sequitur et elevatis manibus suis benedixit eis...*

⁸⁶ Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 8 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 2 co.: Ad secundam quaestionem dicendum, quod aliquid potest figurari dupliciter. Uno modo per id quod est signum et causa: et hoc modo effusio sanguinis et aquae ex latere Christi fuit figura huius sacramenti. Alio modo per id quod est signum tantum; et sic quantum ad id quod est sacramentum tantum in Eucharistia, fuit figura ejus oblatio Melchisedech; quantum autem ad id quod est res et sacramentum, scilicet ipsum Christum passum, fuit figura agnus paschalis; quantum autem ad id quod est res tantum, scilicet gratiam, fuit signum manna, quod reficiebat, omnem saporem suavitatis habens.

⁸⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas. The Three Greatest Prayers. Commentaries on: The Lord's Prayer; the Hail Mary; the Apostles' Creed. Manchester NH: Sophia Institute Press 1990, p. 41.

confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ... [c Heb 10:19].⁸⁸

†††

St. Thomas' Primary Text

... So that they might be certain regarding His death, one of the soldiers **opened His side with a lance**. And it is significant that the text says ***opened*** and not ***wounded***. The reason is because through this side, **there was opened to us the gateway to eternal life**. Rv 4:1: ***... I looked and beheld a door was opened in heaven ...***

This was the door in the side of the **Ark**, through which those animals that would not perish entered [cf. Gn 7].

But this opened door is the cause of salvation, from which continuously there flowed blood and water, which is most miraculous, in that from the body of a deceased man, in which the blood had congealed, still flowed...Indeed this was done so that Christ might show that which He was, i.e., a true man... Furthermore this was done to show that through the Passion of Christ, we achieve full ablution, from sins and that is, from our stains. We are washed of our sins through His blood, which is the price of our redemption [1 P 1:18: ***you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver...but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled...***

From our stains, though, we are cleansed through the water, which is the bath of our regeneration [Ezk 36:25]: ***... And I will pour clean water upon you and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness... - there shall be a fountain open to the House of David and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner and the unclean woman...*** [Zc 13:1].

And therefore, these two pertain especially to two Sacraments: water pertains to the Sacrament of Baptism, blood pertains to the sacrament of the Eucharist. Or, both pertain to the sacrament of the Eucharist, because in the sacrament of the Eucharist there is mixed water with the wine; even though this water is not of the substance of the sacrament. All this pertains to this figure: ***because just as from the side of Christ sleeping on the cross there flowed blood and water, by which the Church is consecrated; so from the side of the sleeping Adam the woman was formed, who prefigured the Church herself.***

The certitude of this narration is established... And Scripture offers two authorities from the Old Testament. One which refers to the old law which states that they were not to break the bones of the lamb, etc., as is had in Ex 12:46: ***... neither shall you break a bone thereof***, in that from this Paschal Lamb that prefigured Christ.

⁸⁸ In *Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 4 co.: Sed Christus sua passione ianuam illam aperuit, et ad regnum exules revocavit. Aperto enim latere Christi, aperta est ianua Paradisi; et fuso sanguine eius, deleta est macula, placatus est Deus, ablata est debilitas, expiata est poena, exules revocantur ad regnum. Et inde est quod statim latroni dicitur (Luc. XXIII, 43): hodie mecum eris in Paradiso.

The reason as, as is stated in 1 Co 5:7: ***For Christ our Pasch is sacrificed.*** Therefore, it was ordered by God that the bones of the paschal lamb would not be broken, so that there might be given to be understood that the **fortitude of the true and unblemished Lamb in no way was to be disturbed.**

Hence, the Jews thought that through His Passion they would destroy the power of His teaching, but conversely, it was strengthened [1 Co 1:18]: ***... for the word of the Cross to them indeed that perish is foolishness: but to them that are saved, i.e., to us, it is the power of God.*** Therefore, it was sated earlier, Jn 8:28: ***... Jesus therefore said to them: When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He...***

The second authority refers to that which states that the lance opened His side, and is had in Zc 12:10: ***... and they shall look upon the One they have pierced*** - our reading of this is: ***they will look on Me Whom they have pierced.***

Therefore, if we join to this the word of the prophet, **it is manifest that the Crucified Christ is God.** For what the prophet says in the Person of God, the Evangelist attributes to Christ. ***They will see, the text reads, at the coming judgment:*** Rv 1:7: ***... they will look upon Him, converted by faith, and so forth...***⁸⁹



⁸⁹ Sed ut certificarentur de morte, unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit. Et signanter dicit aperuit, non vulneravit; quia per hoc latus, aperitur nobis ostium vitae aeternae. Apoc. IV, 1: post hoc vidi ostium apertum. Hoc est ostium in latere arcae, per quod intrant animalia diluvio non peritura: Gen. VII. Sed hoc ostium est causa salutis, unde continuo exivit sanguis et aqua, quod est valde miraculosum, ut de corpore mortui, in quo est congelatus sanguis, sanguis exeat...

Item hoc factum est ad ostendendum quod per passionem Christi plenam ablutionem consequimur, a peccatis scilicet et maculis. A peccatis quidem per sanguinem, qui est pretium nostrae redemptionis. I Petr. I, 18: non corruptibilibus auro et argento redempti estis de vana vestra conversatione; sed pretioso sanguine quasi agni incontaminati et immaculati Christi. A maculis vero per aquam quae est lavacrum nostrae regenerationis. Ez. c. XXXVI, 25: effundam super vos aquam mundam; et mundabimini ab omnibus inquinamentis vestris; Zach. XIII, 1: erit fons patens domui David et habitatoribus Ierusalem in ablutionem peccatoris et menstruatae.

Et ideo haec duo specialiter pertinent ad duo sacramenta: aqua ad sacramentum Baptismi, ad Eucharistiam sanguis. Vel utrumque pertinet ad Eucharistiam, quia in sacramento Eucharistiae miscetur aqua cum vino; quamvis aqua non sit de substantia sacramenti. Competit etiam hoc figurae: quia sicut de latere Christi dormientis in cruce fluxit sanguis et aqua, quibus consecratur Ecclesia; ita de latere Adae dormientis formata est mulier, quae ipsam Ecclesiam praefigurabat...

... Et ponit duas auctoritates veteris testamenti. Unam quae refertur ad hoc quod dicit non frugerunt eius crura etc., et habetur Ex. XII, v. 46 os non comminuetis ex eo scilicet agno paschali qui praefigurabat Christum. Quia, ut dicitur I Cor. V, 7: Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus. Ideo a Deo ordinatum est ut non comminuerentur ossa agni paschalis, ut daretur intelligi quod fortitudo veri agni et incontaminati Iesu Christi nullo modo erat commovenda per passionem. Unde Iudaei putabant per passionem virtutem doctrinae Christi destruere; sed potius corroborata est. I Cor. I, 18: verbum crucis pereuntibus quidem stultitia est; sed nobis virtus Dei est. Ideo supra VIII, 28, dixit: cum exaltaveritis filium hominis, tunc cognoscetis quia ego sum. Secunda auctoritas refertur ad hoc quod dicit lancea latus eius aperuit, et habetur Zach. XII, 10: videbunt in quem transfixerunt: ubi nostra littera habet: aspicient ad me, quem confixerunt. Unde si nos coniungimus verbum prophetae, manifestum est quod Christus crucifixus est Deus. Nam quod propheta dicit in persona Dei, Evangelista attribuit Christo. Videbunt, inquit, ad iudicium venientem: Apoc. I, 7, vel aspicient conversi per fidem et cetera.

A Thought from St. Bonaventure

Jesus pierced with a Lance

The Seraphic Doctor contemplated Jn 19:34, and garnered some Christological, Ecclesiological, Soteriological and Sacramental reflections, The great Church Doctor's meditations focus more upon the Blood and Water flowing freely from the side of the sleeping Christ after His physical death. These are the rice of our salvation, bursting abundantly forth from the inexhaustible fountain of His Heart. This spiritual food and drink flow form the living fount, that gushes forth unto life eternal: ***the water that Christ gives becomes in each a spring of living water welling up to eternal life*** I [cf. Jn 4:14].⁹⁰

30: Then, in order that the Church might be formed **out of the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross**, and that the words of Scripture might be fulfilled which say: ***they will look on him whom they have pierced*** [cf. Jn 19:34; Zc 12:10], the divine plan permitted that one of **the soldiers should pierce open His sacred side with a lance. While blood mixed with water flowed**, the price of our salvation was poured forth, which gushing from the secret fountain of the heart gave power to the sacraments of the Church to confer the life of grace and to become for those already living in Christ a draught *of the fountain of living water springing up to eternal life* [cf. Jn 4:14]. Behold how the spear thrown by the perfidy of Saul, i.e., of the reprobate Jewish People, through the divine mercy, ***found the wall without making a wound*** [q K 19:10], and ***made a cleft in the rock and a hollow place in the cliff as an abode for doves ...*** [Ct 2:14].

Rise, therefore, beloved of Christ, ***be like the dove that makes its nest in the heights in the mouth of a cleft*** [Jr 48:28]. There, ***like a sparrow that finds a home*** [Ps 83:4], do not cease to keep watch; there, like the turtle dove, hide the off-springs of your chaste love; there, apply your mouth ***to draw from the Savior's fountains*** [Is 12:3] for this is the river arising from the midst of paradise, which, ***divided into four branches*** [Gn 2:10], and flowing into devout hearts, waters and makes fertile the whole earth.⁹¹



De Vita Mystica

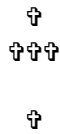
When St. Bonaventure begins to 'theologize' upon the Blood flowing from the side of Christ, he begins almost automatically to speak of the **Heart of Christ**: thus, the biblical text concentrates on the sacred Side of Christ opened by the Roman

⁹⁰ For these thoughts, cf. Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background*. o.c., pp. 266, ff.]

⁹¹ **Bonaventure. *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis***. The Classics of Western Spirituality. Translation and Introduction by Ewert Cousins. Preface by Ignatius Brady, OFM. Paulist 1978, *The Tree of Life*, pp. 154, f. [For a description of this work, cf. Introduction, pp. 34-37].

lance, and the learned theologian ponders the sacred Heart of Christ. St. Bonaventure offers this reflection:

c. 3, n. 5: ... Indeed, for this Your side was pierced, so that an entrance might lie open for us. For this your Heart was wounded, so that in it we might be able to dwell, freed from exterior disturbances. Nevertheless, on that account it was wounded so that **through a visible wound, we might see the invisible wound of love**. How could this ardor be better shown, except that **not only the body but also that Heart** conceded to be pierced by a lance? ... Let us embrace our Wounded One Whose **hands** and **feet, side** and **heart** the wicked ones dug ...⁹²



⁹² Presented by Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background*, o.c. pp. 267, f.

D. THE POWERS OF DARKNESS AND BIBLICAL DARKNESS⁹³

Introduction:

The “Night” in Sacred Scripture

[Ps 130; Jb 4:12-21; 28; Ws 18:1-4I; Mk 15:33, par.]⁹⁴

[1] The night for ancient Israel was the time of Creation in the first Genesis story - it was “evening, morning... the first, second, third, etc. day...” Jacob wrestled the whole night with the Angel [cf. Gn 32:25]. In Exodus, it was the time of salvation. Moses encountered the angel along his way in the deep of night Ex 4:24,ff.]. References to the night occur more than 200 times in the OT.

[2] There were nights of feasting [cf. Is 30:29], as well as of suffering and sorrow [cf. Jb 7:3, ff.]. For Job particularly, the ‘night’ was indeed a terribly ‘dark’ time [cf. Jb 4:12, ff; 24:14; 35:10; 36:20]. The night is a symbol of blessing [cf. Is 15:1, f.] - but, also of calamity [cf. Mi 3:6]. There is little evidence that the night was a special time for the demons. However, the “Night Hag” [*lilith*] makes her unwelcome appearance, as a female demon [cf. Is 34:14], falsely connected to the night due to a mistaken interpretation of the root word. A better rendition might be: “an air-borne maiden!”.

[3] The Birth of Jesus, the Agony of Gethsemane as well as the Resurrection: all seem to have taken place in the deep of the night. Night assumes an ominous symbolic importance in Jn 9:4; 11:10 - the end of opportunity for meritorious work. In Rm 13:12, night is the dark time of evil, which will soon disappear before the day time of Salvation. “Night” and “Day” are presented as opposite spiritual principles [cf. 1 Th 5:5, ff.]. The night needs to be overcome when it is a symbol of evil and sorrow [cf. Zc 14:7; Rv 21:25; 22:5].

§§§

{I} Psalm 130

From the depths I call to you, o Lord...my soul relies on the Lord, more than a watchman on the coming of the dawn, Let Israel rely on Yahweh as much as the watchman on the dawn!

(1) This is the 11th Song of the Ascents [Pss120-134]. They were most likely sung by the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. On their way, they would have passed through the “Valley of the Balsam” [not unlike our “weeping willow” - cf. Ps 84:6 +] This seems to have been at the point of the junction of the roads leading to Jerusalem.

⁹³ Lorraine CAZA, CND, *Mon Dieu, pourquoi m’as-tu abandonné?* Recherches Nouvelle Series 24 Montreal: Bellarmin/ Paris: du Cerf, 1989, pp. 173-195, *passim*.

⁹⁴ Cf. S.J. DeVries, “Night”, in: *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, K-Q. Nashville/NY: Abingdon 1962, Vol. IV, p. 549.

(a) IN the Latin Church, this Psalm is almost universally known as the **De Profundis** - a time honored part of the prayers offered for the deceased. This Psalm is indeed a Prayer of Hope, while at the same time being one of the admission of one's personal guilt: the Lord will watch over His People so that they will never be over-run by the wicked - nor will the good ever give up their quest for the Lord.

(b) This is a Psalm that sounds very much like the prayer of Jonah [2:3, ff.]: *...Out of my distress, I cried to Yahweh - and he answered me. From the belly of Sheol, I cried out - and you heard my voice. For you threw me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods closed round me...But, you raised my life from the Pit. Yahweh, my God! When my soul was growing every weaker, Yahweh, I remembered you - and my prayer reached you in your Holy temple....*

(c) The closing lines of the Prophet Micah also offer us consolation in the line of Ps 130: *...What God can compare with you for pardoning guilt, and for overlooking crime? He does not harbor anger forever, since He delights in showing faithful love. Once more have pity on us, tread down our faults; through our sins to the bottom of the sea... [cf. Mi 7:18, ff.]*.

(d) Some of the Fathers of the Church, such as Hilary, John Chrysostom, Theodoretus - thought that this Psalm was an inspired prayer for the cessation of the Babylonian Captivity. Many modern interpreters have held that this Prayer is particularly suitable for anyone undergoing a very painful human experience, such as: sickness; persecution; prisoners; those suffering the fear of death - or, even the anguish of a sense of sinfulness.

(e) Biblical scholars do not think that this Penitential Psalm reaches the *pathos*, the spiritual richness and psychological depth of the **Miserere**. Yet, it seems to flow from the same religious inspiration. It is a most moving composition, of spontaneous manner - proceeding from its sublime faith in the infinite Mercy of God: *... with You is forgiveness, O Lord..! I rely on Your promise... my whole being hopes in the Lord...! Its supplication of crying out from the depths is based on the Infinite Divine Goodness and Mercy*

(2) This Psalm offers its own "theology" of the efficacy of every humble and trusting Prayer. The writer of these verses was **convinced of the Divine Mercy** and that the culpable would indeed be redeemed. This is a spirit that was already looking far into the distance to the gospel times: *... Take comfort, My child, your sins are forgiven...! [Jesus' words to the paralytic - Mk 9:2] - ...Then, Peter went up to Him and said: 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus responded: 'Not seven I tell you, but 70 x 7...!' [cf. Mt 18:21, ff.]*

(3) Redemption is the core and the grandeur of this Psalm. The central concern of this suppliant has been his past sin - and one with this, and even surpassing it - is the pardon that the Lord will bestow. The entire Psalm rests on the solid foundation, or the capital dogma of the gratuity of Pardon. From this central belief, two factors emerge as certain:

- first of all, that God is Merciful Pardon - that the divine life in our regard is this forgiveness;

- if this were not the case, humanity would simply cease to exist.

(a) There are various images circulating here:

- the unhappy person, who cries out for his/her awesome abyss;

- the watchmen who long for the return of light into their lives - frequently looking to the distant eastern horizon for the first streaks of the new day of the Lord;

- the conviction of the fidelity of God and His generous ransom.

(b) These three images circulate around three other inter-connected images:

- sin is compared to a flood, a marine abyss, and the floods seem to engulf the hapless, wretched sinner - and only God can reach out a saving hand;

- there is the image of the terrible Dark Night, and only the Sawn of the Divine Mercy can dissipate the gloom;

- thirdly, the unknown person, is all weighed down by his/her slavery. The Most High Himself has already made it known that He would be willing to pay the ransom price to set the unhappy hostage free. Sin is presented by this anonymous believing Psalmist as the most profound distress of humanity - and it is a distress that only God can resolve by saving one from the flood, and by bringing a ray of hope to life.

(c) Then, there are the three revealed realities that easily are understood symbolically as Scripture unfolds:

- **the desert**: as the watchmen of the desert camp, looks furtively toward the distant eastern horizon for the first glimpses of the new day - he yearns for the quick passing of the terrible desert night;

- **the darkness**: yearning for the coming of the New Dawn, and the Day of the Lord.. The anonymous watchman of ancient times is a “:type”, a kind of model of all who would yearn for the coming of Christ, the Light from the East, the Light of all Nations, to come to them;

- **the deep**: the conclusion of this trio of alliteration - these are easily understood as the primordial powers of chaos which then “spiritualize” as the great enemies of the spiritual life - the “deep” is most present as a biblical theme of spirituality [cf. Ps 18; 69:3, 15; 88:17; Is 51:10, ff.; Ezk 27:34].

(4) `This is a Psalm of great hope - the darkness will become light - the desert, will be the Garden of Delights - and the deep will become the streams of salvation.

{II} Jb 4:12-21: The Revealing Night

... A whisper has come to my ears, at the hour when dreams master the mind, and slumber lies heavy on man, a shiver of horror ran through me, and my bones quaked with fear...Someone stood there ...the form remained before me. Silence - and then I heard a voice: "Was there ever any man found blameless in the presence of God, or faultless in the presence of his master...?"

(1) Scholars refer to this experience in the Book of Job as described in the speech of Eliphaz as "the revealing night".⁹⁵ This awful night of Job is something of a "relic" of the terrible primordial night of the original chaos, and an anticipation of the much tormented man's descent into *Sheol* forever. The discourses of God will be presented in this way [cf. Jb 38:19-21], as coming through the darkness of the night. This is a paradoxically transparent, illuminating, clarifying night showing the contrast between the weakness of the human nature and the immensity of the mystery of God's plan. In some ways, this is a hint of that "salvific night" of Exodus [cf. 12:42; 13:21, ff.] something like the ninth plague, and remembered liturgically in the Paschal Liturgy.

(2) There are many such "nights" throughout the biblical accounts. It would be enough to remember the "dark night" of Isaac [cf. Gn 26:24]; that of Jacob [cf. Gn 28:10-22]; the night of Balaam [cf. Nb 22]; the night of Zeccharia [cf. Zc 1:8], as well as that of Daniel [cf. 2:19; 7:2]. It is a theme that is also present in non-biblical writings - there is almost a natural, religious sense built into the "night".

(3) While the night may be somewhat "ambivalent", it is sometimes seen as a time of fear [cf. Jb 4:13; Si 4);5, ff.], for Job it is a recollection of the primordial chaos and the anguish of simply being a creature, a human being. There is a "built-in" anguish for human weakness. For Job, though, it seems to be forming into a special time in which the infinite mystery of the Plan of God gradually comes into the light. The secret activities of God are present in other OT texts: there is a kind of "epiphanic" sleep induced on human beings [cf. Jb 33:15]; in Gn [2:21] woman is created during the deep sleep of the First Adam, as the Church comes to life through the open side of Christ, as has been noted. The night was also the background for the Covenant of Blood between the Lord and Abraham [cf. Gn 15:12]. It is in the night that David and Saul reached some agreement [cf. 1` S 26:12] - at night the Lord moved against Jerusalem [cf. Is 29:10].

(4) The theme of the night recurs throughout the drama recounted in the Book of Job, particularly in the various speeches of his "friends" [cf. 9:2; 15:14, ff.; 25:4, ff.; 32:2]. In a sense, the entire argument of these "friends" might be framed in the premise of the nocturnal revelation - even though their cold accusations against Job harden ever more, as they are presented. The night is a time of challenged clarification - but, in the end, the Plan of God will conquer the darkness.



⁹⁵ Cf. Gianantonio Borghonovo, *La notte e il suo sole. Luce e tenebre nel Libro di Giobbe. Analisi simbolica*. ROMA: PIB Analecta Biblica # 135, 1995, pp. 202- 207, passim.

{III} Jb 28: A Hymn in Praise of Wisdom⁹⁶

... Man makes an end of darkness, when he pierces to the utmost depths the black and lightless rock... that earth from which bread comes, is ravaged underground by fire...But, tell me, where does wisdom come from? Where is understanding to be found?[cf. vv. 12, 20, the same refrain]. And he said to man: ... Wisdom? It is fear of the Lord. Understanding? - avoidance of evil. [v. 28]

(1) Wisdom of itself is inaccessible to human beings. - God is making it known through His word to Israel in a unique manner [cf. Ba 3:9, ff.]. "Fear of the Lord" is at the basis of the human response to this mystery Wisdom is the mistress of the cosmos. While it is a Divine Attribute, this literary personification paves the way for the theology of the Word [cf. Pr 8:22, ff. +; Jn 1:1, ff.].⁹⁷

(2) The Refrain in vv. 12 and 20 is then completed when the question regarding "Wisdom" and "Understanding" is finally answered. It is only in the last verse that the word **adam** appears - in all the other verses, this noun is implicit.

(a) In the first verses of this chapter, there is quite an array of metals that need to be mined. The central metals are silver, gold, iron and bronze - in addition to their symbolism in spiritual writings, these do have a long cultural tradition. There is some symbolic connection between these metals and wisdom. The connection of these metals, discovered in the perennial night under the ground shows that they have roots in the heavens, or the skies above. Hence, there is a certain "celestial" characterization of these metals. Thus, in their fusion there is a certain conjunction of heaven and earth.

(b) There is a pervasive sense of an **espousals in nature**, through the **feminine mystique** regarding the earth - and the masculinity of the sun the Groom of the skies [cf. Ps 19]. The ancient belief of the heavenly origins of metals is also noted in the old etymologies of words: "iron" is traceable back to a composite of words meaning "celestial metal" -or, the "metal from the stars". The work with metals is often compared to the work of the **Creator**.

(c) The metals are comparable to **embryoes**. These are extracted from the womb of Mother Earth in order to help along their maturation, and combination with other realities. The ancient belief was the if metals were left long enough in the ground, they would be born as gold! The application was also immediate to the mystical, spiritual life: those who extract the metals from the earth are then challenged to improve their status - as each human being is made to the image of God in creation, and becomes more and more in His likeness by living the **Torah**.

⁹⁶ Cf. G. Borgonovo, *La notte e il suo sole...*, o.c., pp.255-284, passim

⁹⁷ Cf. Jerusalem Bible footnote here, Jb28:1, +]

(d) This mystery of “conjunction”, or **espousals**, is one that leads to the understanding that if the “new” is to be born, something of the old must be surrendered to death - out of this will always come new combinations, new life, a **New Creation**. The mystical symbolism notes the *coincidence of opposites*.

(e) There is a certain synthesis that evolves from the so-called **Nocturnal Regime**: first, there is a kind of harmony; then a certain dialectic, or exchange and contrast; this moves toward a certain historical structure, that then is evidenced by the ensuing progress. This is all deduced by the ancients in the on-going harmony between night and day: it was evening, and then the morning!

(f) By art, humanity is able to place a limit on the darkness - he brings light to what lies hidden in the earth, in the sky above, in his own heart. There is a terrible struggle with the powers of darkness, but in the end these will be defeated. The “victory” of science over the oppressive, repressive powers of darkness readily compares humanity to the Creator.

(g) The access to the depths of the sea, the earth, as well as the heights above by the human mind has joined with it a “sense of the sacred.” This is a deep plummeting of the depths, or a soaring to the heights, which holds in check any infernal powers that prefer the secrecy of darkness for their work.

(3) There is developed the symbolism of **Mother Earth** and the secrets she holds hidden within herself. The surface of the earth receives the grain which falls upon it - out of this, new life is generated not only in plant life. For the ancients, in some way there was the “generation” and development of precious metals in the womb of the earth. By human art, these extracted metals can be “brought up”, or developed unto maturation. The “growth” of the metals in the womb of the earth was a belief quite widely dispersed in antiquity.

(4) With these technological developments, human **wisdom** is esteemed much like **gold** is for its precious value. In order to find this wisdom, it is necessary to pass through four “negations” [cf. vv. 13, ff.]: the road is unknown, it is not in the land of the living. It is not in the Abyss, nor the Sea; it is beyond the price of gold and silver - no precious gold or stone, “glass”, can match its value.

(a) It is interesting to note that “gold” is mentioned about five times here. Gold is the ultimate result of the uninterrupted gestation of the other metals deep within the womb of Mother earth.

(b) This serves as an apt comparison with wisdom - which only God “knows directly”. The sublime art of metallurgy serves as a symbol to understand the relationship between God and Wisdom. In the deep caverns of the mines, the sight of a human being reaches its extreme limit - whereas the sway of God embraces the totality of heaven and earth, what is above and what is below [v. 21]. Fire is needed to exercise this art - whereas God is presented as One Who dominates even the wind and the seas, as He did in the First Creation [cf. v. 25].

(5) Thus, Job almost from the outset is overwhelmed by the power, majesty and wisdom of the Creator: ... *His heart is wise and his strength is great...He moves the mountains...He sakes the earth...the sun, at His command, forbears to rise, and on the stars He sets His seal...* [cf. Jb 9:4, ff.]. In the great struggle between the evening and the morning, the night and the light - is won by the all wise and powerful God of Mercy.



{IV} Ws 18:1-4: Pillar of Fire, Wisdom, Torah⁹⁸

... for your holy ones, all was light...the persecutors could hear their voices but not see their shapes...in contrast to the darkness, you gave your people a pillar of blazing fire, to guide them on their unknown journey, a mild sun for their ambitious migration...by them the imperishable Light of the Law was to be given to the world...

(1) The Column of Fire in the Night

(a) This column of blazing fire, like the sun, was sent to guide the Chosen People on their ambitious migration, on their unknown journey. There is a constant contrast, as in 16:20: ...*How differently with Your People! You gave them the food of angels, from heaven untiringly sending them bread already prepared, containing every delight, satisfying every taste... it transformed itself into what each eater wished...*

(b) The author seems to be referring to Ex 13:21, f. where it is read that the Lord guided His people through the night with a Pillar of Fire, and throughout the day with a Pillar of Smoke. The role of this Pillar of Fire is primarily to serve as a guide in this unknown and difficult journey. The Lord Himself is almost identical to the Cloud as He Himself leads His People out of difficulty [cf. Ex 13:7; 15:13; Nb 24:8, Ps 76:21; 77:53; 105:9; Dt 1:33].

(c) The Lord Himself is the Guide of Wisdom [cf. Ws 7:15] - and this is repeated throughout Wisdom [cf. 9:11; 10:10,17]. Wisdom assumes a divine role, that of "guide" throughout the Psalms [5:9] - with ultimate reference going back to God Himself. Thus, the Column of Fire assumes in the light of these texts a symbolic aspect, and it seems to allude to that Wisdom which is the true guide of the Israelites.

(d) Israel's migration is both ambitious, as the journey is unknown. The term chosen is something like the Christian "Way" in Acts - it implies a real challenging and difficult undertaking. The Passage across the Sea of Reeds uses this word. Israel is being led to the Lord by a "round about" way, never by the most direct, it

⁹⁸ cf. Luca Mazzinghi, *Notte di paura e di luce. Egesis di Sap 17:1-18:4*. Roma: PIB. Analecta Biblica # 134. 1995, pp. 212, ff., passim.

seems [cf. Ex 8:17, f.]. The Lord will reward His saints according to their good deeds, guiding them along the wondrous way [cf. Ws 10:17].

(e) As the Pillar of Cloud, long ago, is transformed into a Pillar of Fire [cf. Ex 40:38 - the very last line of Exodus: ... *For the Cloud of Yahweh rested on the Tabernacle by day, and a fire shone within the cloud by night, for all the House of Israel to see. And it was so for every stage of their journey...* While for the Israelites the sea became the Path to salvation, whereas for their persecutors it was a dead-end, leading to their demise. For the Israelites the Cloud by Day is their Fire in the Night, leading them to safety, freedom and new life.

(2) The Light of the Law:

(a) This is the imperishable light of the Law for the believers. In Ws 10: 17 the fire of Exodus is identified with Wisdom itself. This guides like the sun during the day and the stars for the night way-farer. Ws 18 emphasizes solely the luminous aspect of the cloud in the night. It is all compared to a non-bothersome sun - which desert journey-men would profoundly appreciate. There is clearly the hand of God in all this. The principal biblical texts show this guiding force of the Column of Fire [cf. Ex 13:21, f.; 14:19, f.; Nb 10:34; 14:14; Dt 1:33].

(b) This special cloud also provided "cover", and certain protection for the People of God [cf. Nb 14:14] The protection was from the blistering sun, and also from the piercing desert storms. In the Prophet Is [4:5, f.], there is an eschatological dimension - in the last days, the Lord will come to Mount Zion like a cloud of smoke in the day, and a fire in the night. In Ws 19:3, In Ws 19:7 the eschatological perspective combines with the memories of the First Creation.

(c) The Book of Sirach [cf. 24"4] also joins together the figure of Wisdom and the Pillar of Fire The Pillar of Fire becomes identified with the Throne of Mercy In the final analysis, it is Wisdom that offers protection to the pilgrim on life's long and ambitious, unknown migration. This achieves always a kind of eschatological dimension - we do not have here a lasting home. At best, there is a desert tent provided by the protective cloud-cover.

(d) All of this provides almost a natural setting for reflections on the **TORAH**. In Pr 6:23, the Precept of the Law in the LXX translation is seen as a lamp for our feet, a light for our steps. In Ps 119:105, the Word of God is a lamp for the pathway of the just. In the celebrated passage of Is 2:1-3 [cf. also Mi 4:1-3] the People is invited to walk in the Light of the Lord - the Law of the Lord will come forth from Sion [cf. Ho 6:5; Zp 3:5; Is 51:4]. This is the Divine Judgment and will be compared to light [cf. Ps 42:3] - the light and the truth come easily together.

(e) Finally, all sense of provincialism is overcome in a universalist perspective. In Ws 18:4 - the imperishable Light of the Law is given to the whole world [cf. 2:3] already opened up a universalist perspective and this is noted in Second-Is [51"4] The Suffering Servant, then, whose words and witness are offered as a

ransom, will indeed be ***Lumen Gentium*** [cf. Is 42:1-6; 49:1-6]. Thus, the People of God is being challenged to penetrate the darkness with the use of God's Word, Law and Servant and to bring this Wisdom to the world. There is clearly presented here the idea of the "incorruptibility" of the Law and God's Wisdom.

†††

{V} Mk 15:33, par. - Darkness at the Sixth Hour⁹⁹

There are several reasonable possibilities here: the darkness covering the whole earth is a factual event, either natural [eclipse, storm], or a special miracle. Some early commentators, such as the Pseudo Areopagite, considered it to be a figurative description, reflecting OT eschatological language - or, the language of the Greeks associated with the deaths of the famous. The evangelists used this theme of "darkness" to bring out the more the theme of **the redemptive death of the Lord**.

(1) **Mark:** Jesus was crucified about 9:00 a.m. [15:25] - during these intervening hours no human mercy was shown. Mk seems to note the darkness even before Jesus dies. In His cry of abandonment [cf. 15:34, 47, at 3:00 p.m.], it is still noted. The scene is well presented already in Ps 22:8 - Jesus' dying cry is the opening line of this Psalm [v. 2]. As a result, Jesus is offered vinegar to drink, fulfilling Ps 69:22. Chaotic darkness had preceded the creation of light [cf. Gn1:2, f.] In the Exodus plague, there is darkness over the whole land [cf. Ex 10:21, ff.]. The first Passover context of that plague makes it an even better parallel for Jesus' death.

Perhaps the best parallel in the OT may be found in the darkness of the Day of the Lord, ***dies irae*** [cf. Zp 1:5; Jl 2:2, 10; 3:4]. Amos [8:9, f.] seems particularly applicable: the sun shall set at mid-day, and the light darkened on earth in the day-time. They will mourn their only son. God is providing a sign as a part of the judgment on the world, a warning of a punishment now beginning. While there is no historical record of any world-wide darkness, Mk offers a universalist scene: the Roman centurion will speak for the whole world in his eulogy for Jesus: *In truth this man was a son of God!* [cf. Mk 15:39].

(2) **Matthew:** In 27: 45 he follows Mk closely - only Mt[v. 25] has the Jewish People in toto, accepting responsibility for the death of the Lord. Then, in vv. 51-53, there will be other eschatological signs, such as the earthquake, opening of tombs,, raising the dead. There is a heightened possibility here that Mt is depending on Ex 10:22 for the darkness motif. This is a moment of salvific judgment.

(3) **Luke:** in 23:44, f., he presents other challenges regarding the darkness - he notes this darkness before the death of Jesus and the rending of the sanctuary veil after the death. The two signs seem to be of similar origin, reflecting the wrath of God. Scientists state that an eclipse usually lasts less than ten minutes - but, here we have three hours of darkness. However, the precise translation of Luke is: "the sun

⁹⁹ Raymond E. Brown, SS, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*. Vol. 2. NY: Doubleday 1994, pp.1034-1043, *passim*

having been eclipsed.” However, this is all interpreted, Luke has seen this as an eschatological sign of the “last times”.



Presentation

[1] **Three Hours of Darkness of Golgotha**

[2] **OT Darkness**

- a. **Exodus Fire for the Journey in the Night**
- b. **Prophetic Day of the Lord**
- c. **The Coming of Light on this Day**

Reflections



Presentation: This reflection ponders the various circumstances of the moment of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, dramatized also in His lamentations: ***My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?*** - from Ps 22. This cry is inscribed within the announcement of His impending death, inserted between two signs: **the veil of the Temple that is torn** [left for another later reflection] and **the Three Hours of Darkness**. These two elements seem to introduce us into a level of considerations that are quite different from that which is noted in the remainder of Mk’s account. These circumstances do not involve physical, or moral suffering being inflicted upon Jesus – it is not a matter of Jesus’ reactions to what is taking place: these are recorded phenomena of the environment at that moment: at the very hour of the day when the sun would be at its zenith, the world seems to have been plunged into total obscurity for three full hours.



1. **The reasons for the Three Hours of Darkness** [Mk 15:34 b]: ... ***when the 6th hour came, there was darkness over the land until the 9th hour*** ... : there are several considerations that come to the fore here:

a. **The Darkness is an Historical Fact and a Theological Motif:** these three Hours are situated with clear precision both in Mk and in Mt [27:45]. This repeated witness means that the darkness came from noon time until 3:00 p.m. Lk reduces the precision to some extent by saying until ‘about’ the ninth hour. The accounts seem to be presenting a weather phenomenon, or a mysterious occurrence at mid-day, that was historically verifiable. For so many, the thought of an **eclipse** would come to mind, but leaves many perplexed: from other accounts, it is stated that Jesus’ crucifixion took place at a time of the full moon, which would leave an eclipse a meteorological impossibility. And from the ‘historical critical’ perspective, there is no contemporary accounting that any eclipse took place on that day.

Great biblical giants in the field of interpretation have pushed for the possibility of the winds from Africa, bearing with them heavy amounts of desert silt, known to many who have lived in Rome, and elsewhere as the **sirocco** - taking their lead from

these authoritative interpretations continue to defend the 'historical' account here. Rather than opt for either the historical view – or, the symbolic manifestation, leads many to ask: why not both views? The phenomenon will continue to *pique* both the imaginations of interpreters – but, this episode also needs also to be looked at in **faith** – this will be the effort here.

b. Unaccepted Positions: these two views are rejected by most believers today, bearing in mind also that this darkness was familiar to more than one of those who left the account of Jesus' final hours:

- **Virgil's Opinion:** there is a customary Hellenistic phenomenon that surrounds the death of celebrated human beings in an intense period of obscurity. Virgil offers his own startling account of the death of Julius Caesar. This has led people to think of the darkness surrounding Mount Vesuvius, or Mount Etna, well known volcanoes in Italy as in the Novel and later movie, '***Last Days of Pompey***', and in a more recent novel depicting the terrible explosion around the autumn [election time] of the year 89 b.C.e.

- **In Jewish circles** [cf. the apocryphal work, 2nd Book of *The Secrets of Enoch* - this was a customary phenomenon that would record the passing of celebrated rabbis. In these cases it would simply a characteristic that would indicate the ending of the life and the mission of an important personality, whose passing was widely mourned.

Believers need little convincing to maintain that these repeated biblical accounts simply do not have the function of trying to present Jesus, or persuade people that Jesus was some civil or religious hero, whose passing was much mourned by those He benefited.

c. The Quest for a Solution within the Evangelists:

- **Darkness as a Positive Phenomenon:** Mk does not offer us much help regarding his use of this rare word meaning **darkness**. He does make us of a verb that is derivative of the Greek word used here, and this comes up in calling to mind that darkening prior to the announcement of the Coming of the Son of Man at the end of time: ... ***But, in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken*** ... [Mk 13:24]. This is a more vague use of the term, and is one of the characteristic signs of the End Times.

- **Darkness as a Negative Phenomenon:** on the more immediate level, the image of solid hours of darkness seems quite negative – and is a phenomenon, parallel to the terribly intense darkness that Jesus felt within when the father 'abandoned' Him [cf. Mk 15:34]. This was a situation of deep spiritual and physical distress and the view of the Crucified and the hostile reaction to Him that is registered throughout. Those nearest the Cross cursed Him, made fun of Him, certainly rejecting Him out of hand. They thought He was invoking Elijah, the one who brings aid to anyone in distress. Darkness expresses on this basic level, the impossibility of seeing, of

comprehending, of communicating. It is a factor of isolation, the awful experience of finding oneself at the mercy of the realities that are completely out of control.

2. A Quest for a Further Understanding in the OT: here the student finds many more possibilities for a deeper appreciation of the theme of 'Darkness'. It appears first of all, in the 'P' account of **Creation** – the very first created value is **Light** [cf. Gn 1:24]. It appears through the **Redemptive Exodus** and its various interpretations through the OT Literature. Darkness is one of the **plagues** inflicted on the Chosen People's persecutors – one that **immediately precedes the death of the First Born**. Following this, Israel is **liberated** from the land of captivity [cf. Ex 10:21-29]. It is also found frequently among the **Prophets** [cf. Am 8:9; 5:18-20; Jl 2:10, ff.; 3:1-5; 4:15, f.; Zp 1:14, ff.].

a. An Important text from Exodus:

... Then Yahweh said to Moses: 'Stretch out your hand towards heaven, and let darkness, darkness so thick that it can be felt cover the land of Egypt.' So, Moses stretched out his hand towards heaven, and for three days there was deep darkness over the whole land of Egypt. No one could see anyone else, or move about for three days, but where the sons of Israel lived there was light for them... [Ex 10:21-23].

Certainly there is something similar here with the Evangelists' account of Jesus' last hours [cf. Mk 15:33; Mt 27:45]. Some scholars draw attention to striking corresponding elements, on the level of vocabulary, between the accounts of the Crucifixion as presented by Mt & Mk and Exodus. These linguistic parallels do not stop there: the Lord ordered Moses to extend his hands toward heaven. Obscurity falls down upon the earth as when Jesus extends His hands on the Cross. The exodus text, it is true, does not speak of three **hours**, but rather three **days**. Furthermore these repeated references to the duration of three days during which the Egyptians could not move about, and this usage to express this impossibility of a verb connoting the **Resurrection**. These particulars seem to rivet the heart of the NT expression to the **Paschal Event**, especially to the announcement of the **Passion** [cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33, f.]. It should also be remarked that on the occasion of the presentation of the last calamity, that of taking the lives of the **First Born** of the Egyptians [cf. Ex 12:30], as also the anticipated announcement made to Moses of **this plague as surpassing all the others in its gravity** [Ex 11:6], the text mentions each time a **loud cry**. This great cry of Egypt noted in ex 12:30 is also followed by the order given to Moses and Aaron: **Get up!**

One might object that the darkness of which it is a question in Exodus is of it striking Egypt, and not Israel – and that the great cry is likewise attributed to the persecutors. This is quite distinct from the situation being pondered on Golgotha, where, according to Mk, the whole world is plunged into the darkness and that it is Jesus who utters the Loud Cry. The correspondence with Ex 10 might invite the careful student to interpret **the land** of Mk 15:33 in the sense of **the land of Israel** – but, it really means the extension of the darkness over the whole earth. Furthermore, the perspective does seem sufficiently distanced from that of exodus –

where it is Egypt who has to live for three days in abject obscurity, while the People of God enjoyed the light.

Other texts may be of some help:

Ap 11:8 ...*Their corpses will lie in the Great City known by the symbolic names Sodom and Egypt, in which their Lord was crucified* ...

Some believe that the last book of Scripture and its apocalypse can help understand these events. The 'Great City', where the Lord was crucified, has symbolic names, Sodom and Egypt. In these last years of NT writing the human persecutors of the Church, as those of Jesus, seem to be, since they act as descendants of these ancient enemies of the Chosen People, those who both persecuted and enslaved Israel. So, this clearly establishes the utilization of symbolic language in the NT, using those metaphors, or symbols already in vogue in the OT. Thus we see that in Is 1:9, ff., the land of Judah and Jerusalem is compared to Sodom and Gomorrah. At the threshold of the NT era, the Book of Wisdom [9:13-17] will make of Sodom and Egypt into symbols *par excellence* of perversity. Furthermore it needs to be noted that these verses associate the perversity of Sodom with its chastisement of being struck blind [cf. Gn 19:11] - as Egypt suffered the plague of thick darkness [Ex 10:21-29]. Thus, some would interpret the expression in Mk 15:33, about darkness covering the entire land as indicating the hardness of the human heart, human perversity, rejecting Jesus Christ, Who had been crucified.

The Book of Wisdom [17:1-18:4]:

... When impious men imagined they had the holy nation in their power, they themselves lay prisoners of the dark in fetters of the long night, confined... banished from eternal providence ... curtained by dark forgetfulness, they were scattered in fearful dismay... nor could the bright blazing stars illuminate that dreadful night ... and they, all locked in that same sleep, while that darkness lasted... were now chased by monstrous specters...

The whole world [of the Chosen People] was shining with brilliant light and, unhindered, went on with its work; over the [persecutors] alone there spread a heavy darkness, image of the dark that would receive them. But, heavier than the darkness, the burden they were to themselves.

But, for your Holy Ones, all was great light. The [persecutors] who could hear their voices, but not see their shapes called them fortunate because they had not suffered [the darkness] too... In contrast to the darkness, You gave Your People a pillar of blazing fire, to help them on their unknown journey, a mild sun for their ambitious migration. But well the [sinners] deserved to be deprived of light and imprisoned in darkness for having kept in captivity your children, by whom the imperishable light of the Law was to be given to the world...

This third part [cc. 10-19] of the last OT book [of Wisdom] leads us forward to the **darkness of Jesus' last hours**. The fact that the phenomenon of pitch darkness in the Crucifixion Scene was extended for three hours, rather than for three days, and certain other details of Mk 15:33, lead us to a deeper appreciation along the lines of

Exodus. 'Darkness' very easily lends itself to symbolic interpretation as is known well from mystical literature. Furthermore, Israel's tradition makes use of this among the ten plagues surrounding the passage through the Sea of Reeds, and appears in the people's Confession of faith. This close to the Christian era, the Book of Wisdom has given a considerable thrust to the Plagues of Egypt, as is evident in the long meditation on the intervention of **Wisdom's role in history**, forming the entire third part of the Book of Wisdom [cc. 10-19]. In the measure that we are able to find assurance that the message of Wisdom was much present in the consciousness of the community which is found behind this **tradition of the three hours of darkness on Golgotha**. We have already noted the closeness of Mk 15:33 and Ex 10:21-29, the intervention of the passages from **Wisdom [17:1-18:4]**. Those who have opted that the Darkness of Golgotha is merely a symbol of earlier history cite these pregnant verses.

The presence of a NT tradition, like the Apocalypse, containing the theme of the **Plagues of Egypt**, and particularly that of the Darkness [Rv 8:12; 16:10, ff.] makes clear that at a certain date, the Christian community had recourse also to the theme of **darkness**. It might be noted further that this is not so much a memorial of ancient Israel, but the discovery in the OT language and themes that would be very useful to express the End Times.

There is no difficulty in thinking that the OT themes [as in Ex 10:21-29] could have had some influence on Mk [15:33] – and that this **Darkness** theme is even more developed in Ws 17:1, ff. – there is every possibility that this could have impacted the dramatic Crucifixion theme at least to some extent. Wisdom has greatly enriched the understanding of Exodus –and both have impacted Golgotha. There is the dramatization of the opposition between the impious enemies of God and the Chosen People, condemning the former to being **imprisoned in the darkness** while blessing the Holy Nation as enjoying the great **Light of the Nations** [cf. Ws 18:1] even in their **Dark Night of the Soul**. The Chosen People were led in the Desert Journey by **unknown paths**, by a sun that would not scald or blister [*The Living Flame of Love*] –in their **courageous pilgrimage**.

Wisdom renders the experience of the **darkness of the Exodus Journey** under the perspective of **fear**. Darkness has been depicted as an **imprisonment** [17:2], a **jail** without bars [17:16], a night which does not seem to end [17:2], a **banishment** far from eternal providence [17:3], a dreadful night, fearful dismay, haunting specters [17: 3, f.]. It is a matter that is presented as a trial against which magical art can work nothing [17:7], the magicians themselves being paralyzed by fear [17:8], perishing with fear and fright [17:9, ff.], even when fear abated, they died with ridiculous fright, refusing even to look at the air! From which they could not flee [17:10].

This fanciful description of the darkness seems to have been within, the result of a troubling, sinful conscience [17:11]. It derives this description of ridiculous fear from certain exterior phenomena, but the emphasis here is on the one's interior fright, dissatisfaction, there being no solace in interior contemplation. The Wisdom tradition here seems even to go to the point that this fear begins in the depths of a powerless Hades [17:14]. Under the effects of this terror, the most every-day

realities, such as the wind, the melodious singing of the birds, the rebounding sound of the trickling brooks, all become frightening and paralyzing [17:18, f.]. Fear in these verses, then, is symbolized and caused by the inner obscurity which is worse than darkness itself [17:21].

Lastly, prior to the Apocalypse, the Book of Wisdom situates the Plague of darkness under a much more vast horizon than the historical departure from Egypt – even though it was in the **Night**. The references to the depths of a powerless Hades [Ws 127:14] and to the **heavier than darkness**, the image of the obscurity that envelops them [17:20, f.] seems to imply the last end, the apocalyptic times.

Golgotha [Mk 15:33] in the Light of Exodus [10:21-29] and Wisdom [17:1-18:4]: in the measure of this **Exodus** account and its re-presentation a thousand years later in **Wisdom**, many scholars then read the episode of **Golgotha** [Mk 15:33]. These passages provide a bundle of texts that seem to be projected forward toward the account of the Crucifixion:

- first of all, there is some association of the crucified **Jesus and Moses** with their arms extended. And this connection of Moses with the Cross is further strengthened, along with the presence of Elijah, at the Mystery of the **Transfiguration**, on the way to Calvary.
- then, the darkness of Golgotha is sharply contrasted with the brilliant light of the Transfiguration [9:3];
- Moses in relation with the darkness which punishes Egypt due to the Pharaoh's refusal to deliver the People of God - and the darkness of Golgotha on the whole land, over Jerusalem, for its refusal to accept their Savior;
- the innocent First-Born are put to death both in Exodus in the climactic plague after the darkness – and the death of the Innocent One, the First-Born, the Most Beloved Son of God.

Thus, connecting all these themes, we can contemplate Golgotha in terms of liberation, covenant, the New Moses, and a greater than Elijah here. To connect the Exodus episode through Ws 17-18:4 shows some parallels between the Chosen People and the Impious: the domain of these latter is always the darkness, while the Chosen Ones are called to follow the Fire in the Night into the Light. Ws 17 is a sublime contemplation of the darkness: far beyond the material reality of what happened in that ancient desert journey – then which peaked in Golgotha – the material darkness symbolizes the fear, the terror, the inner turmoil of the sin of the impious, and the dread of the Just Man. The extreme expression of darkness is banishment from the eternal providence, commitment to the Powers of Darkness. The sublime application of Ws 17 leads to the ultimate understanding of the Darkness of Golgotha: careful readers are given an insight into the Judgment, the world to come, the End Times.

b. The experience of darkness among the Prophets Amos [8:9] and Joel [2:28-32 – Ac 2:17-21]: as a result many scholars would connect Golgotha and its awesome darkness to be connected to the original act of redemption in exodus [10:21-29], then contemplated in the Midrash of the Book of Wisdom [17-18:4]

perhaps a thousand years after the event, on the dawn of the NT era. It is also true that behind the theme of such darkness in the OT accounts and that of the Death of Jesus, are also present to some extent in the profiles offered through the ages, by the OT Prophets, particularly in their description of the fearsome **Day of the Lord**. This often presents us with the phenomenon of truly dense darkness at mid-day. Even greater than the descriptions offered by Mk and Mt, the Lucan **Gospel** formulation regarding darkness, with its precise mention of the solar eclipse, seems to refer us back to the Day of the Lord as described by the Prophet Amos.

The Book of **Acts**, Lk's second volume, offers Lk's testimony, containing an announcement of the Jesus-Event where there is the accounting of the transformation of the sun into pitch darkness. This is at the heart of the **Pentecost Discourse** of Ac 2:17-21. The text attributed to Peter offers a long citation of the Prophet Joel [2:28-32] announcing the Day of the Lord. The NT contains, therefore, in addition to the Synoptic Accounts of the Cross, also the utilization of the language of **darkness** in order to express a kind of **veil** for the **Paschal Mystery**, and this is presented under the horizon of the **Day of the Lord**. It is interesting to point out that the citation of Jl in Ac 2:17-21 is immediately followed by an announcement of the resurrection of the Crucified One Who is illustrated by a second citation, likewise rather lengthy, taken from Ps 16, containing the formal declaration that God has not **abandoned** 'His Christ' to the Darkness – a text that might shed some light on Jesus' experience of **abandonment** on the Cross and the ensuing **darkness**!

The Prophets have often brought up the phenomenon of the lightning in the rain [water accompanied by fire] – comparable to the mid-night darkness at mid-day. This they have called the **Day of the Lord**.¹⁰⁰ This concept of the Day of the Lord appears, as is noted, quite often in the Prophets and there is not a great deal of agreement among scholars who study this **ideal of Israel's hope**. There is some agreement on the fact that the concept of this 'Day' was nourished at the beginning in the past Theophanies in Israel's History. Thus, the Day of the Lord is presented by making an appeal to those categories that envelop the divine intervention in the liberation from the land of captivity. Hence, a text that would speak of the Day of the Lord in the future, would invoke those descriptions found in Exodus.

To express that which Israel puts into the expression, *the Day of the Lord*, it would be necessary, of course, to contemplate the collection of descriptions that come to the fore from a number of the Prophets, **according to their particular historical contexts** where they are found. It would also be necessary to reflect upon the relationship between this '**Day of Yahweh**' and that which are referred to as the **OT theophanies**. As not all of these can be considered, two Prophets have been selected in whose writings the **darkness** accompanying the Day of the Lord is tantamount. These could also have largely influenced the Tradition, even prior to Mk's Gospel.

¹⁰⁰ There are many texts: Am 5:18-20; 8:9; Is 2:21; 13:6, 9, 10; 22:5; 34:8; Jr 46:10; Lm 2:22; Ezk 7:19; 131:5; 30:3; Jl 2:2, 10, 31; 3:14; 4:14; Hab 15; Zp 14:6; Ml 4:5; Zc 14:6.

Prophets: Am 5:18-20; 8:9-10 a solar eclipse:

... Trouble for those who are waiting so longingly for the day of Yahweh. What will this day of Yahweh mean for you? It will mean darkness, not light as when a man escapes a lion's mouth only to meet a bear; he enters his house and puts his hand on the wall only for a snake to bite him. Will not the Day of Yahweh be darkness, not light? It will all be gloom, without a single ray of light...

... That day – it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks - I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad day light. I am going to turn your feasts into funerals, all your singing into lamentation; I will have your loins all in sack-cloth, your heads all shaved. I will make it a mourning like the mourning for an only son, as long as it lasts it will be like a day of bitterness...

These texts permit the careful reader to note that the Prophet Amos, of the 8th century, calls out to the People whom he addresses to modify their representations of a Day of Yahweh which would be a joyful experience, one that would be luminous, desirable. For Amos, it will be something quite different. In his words, it will be a Day of the divine intervention and one of His decisive interruption. The description of the coming 'Day' is impressive with its view of the **disappearing sun at high noon** [8:9] – and the distress that will be comparable as the **mourning for an only son**.

Joel 1: he refers to the darkness of the day of the Lord repeatedly:

... Cry out to Yahweh, 'Oh, what a day!' For the Day of Yahweh is near, it comes as a devastation from Shaddai. Has not the food disappeared before our eyes? Have not joy and gladness vanished from the House of our God? Seeds shrivel under their clods; the barns are broken down, the granaries lie in ruins, for lack of harvest. What mourning from the beasts! The herds of cattle wander bewildered because they have no pasture. Even the flocks of sheep must bear punishment. To You, Yahweh, I cry ... [vv. 15, ff.]

This is something like a 'fire alarm'! An alert has been sounded. The danger should find the citizenry alerted – and this is nothing other than God Himself! It is the **Lord Shaddai** Who is approaching. The devastation is wide-spread for both the flocks and the fodder, on the grain and the beasts. Nonetheless, this is an appeal addressed to God Himself as the text makes clear. The Coming Lord is seen here as fearsome, redoubtable, Who inexorably is making His way toward the guilty ones. The comparison is made with a force that overturns everything, perhaps not unlike a **hurricane** – as Ex 19 makes some interpreters think of a **volcano** and the voice of the lord roaring from the volcano – as in Job, the awesome word comes from the **whirl-wind**. **El-Shaddai** is the power of destructive force – there is not much time, nor protective space that remain: the 'Day' is localized in a given area. The Lord God seeks the midst of His People.

Joel 2: this chapter opens with a poem which enjoys artistic beauty, perfect symmetry and structure. The day of the Lord here is depicted as a **spiritual combat**, in which the army of the Lord proves to be unstoppable:

... At the sight of the mighty army the peoples are appalled, and every face grows pale... [v. 6]

... Like the dawn there spreads across the mountains a vast and mighty host, such as has never been seen before, such as will never be again, to the remotest ages [v. 2] ...As they come on, the earth quakes, the skies tremble, sun and moon grow dark... [v. 10].

The last lines of the poem which follow this second calling to mind of the cosmic phenomena reveals certain aspects of the reality of this Day of the Lord. God makes His Voice heard, as He once did in Exodus, by the thunder and the lightning – at the head of His troupe – the battle field of the Lord is quite vast, the Word of God is powerful, the Day of the Lord is ‘grand’, ‘redoubtable’ – at this point the question comes forth: ***...great is the day of the Lord, and very terrible – who can face it?...***

In the light of this poem – Jl 2:1-11 – the Prophet is presenting the Day of the Lord here under the imagery of Yahweh taking possession of the universe by God, with the help of His army. What is of major interest to the Prophet is to exalt the Power of God. This poem praising the Word of God is therefore a **Canticle to God’s Glory**.

Joel 3:

A few verses further ahead in the short chapter, Jl 3, there is another reference to the Day of Yahweh, and this one presents formulations that the NT [cf. Ac 2:16:21 +] will re-visit:

... After this I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions. Even on the slaves, men and women will I pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display portents in heaven and on earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the Day of Yahweh dawns, that great and terrible day. All who call on the name of Yahweh will be saved, for on Mount Zion there will be some who have escaped, as Yahweh has said, and in Jerusalem some survivors whom Yahweh will call ... [Jl 3:1-5].

This great and fearsome day has become a Day on which the Lord will send out His Holy Spirit on all flesh, without distinction of sex, age, or social status. It continues, nonetheless, to be described as bringing with it fearsome cosmic transformations, among which indeed once more is the changing of the sun light into dense darkness. In the face of this overwhelming situation, the Prophet declares that salvation is assured to every person who will invoke the Name of the Lord.

Joel 4:

In a piece where it is a question of judgment, and condemnation for the nations but of salvation for Israel – Joel once more places us before the theme of the Day of Yahweh [cf. 4:9-17]. Here it is a matter of an experience which is not to be feared by Jerusalem, or the Israelites – the final verses of the Book of Joel will speak of Judah

and Jerusalem – but, of a judgment which will prove to be most menacing for the nations who will have to take on the ‘Champions of Yahweh.’ The third strophe of this piece calls on the familiar expression: The Day of Yahweh and the final verse offers these thoughts of great interest to our present theme:

...Host on host in the Valley of Decision! For the day of Yahweh is near in the Valley of Decision. Sun and moon grow dark, the stars lose their brilliance. Yahweh roars from Zion, makes His voice heard from Jerusalem; heaven and earth tremble. But Yahweh will be a shelter for His People, a stronghold for the sons of Israel. You will learn that I am Yahweh, your God, dwelling in Zion, My Holy Mountain. Jerusalem will be a holy place no alien will ever pass through it again ... [Jl 4:14-17].

The Day of Yahweh appears here as the **Hour of Verdict, Judgment**, i.e., as the time when the Court Trial ends, and there only remains to execute the sentence of condemnation upon the nations. The text opposes in a startling manner these cosmic grandeurs, regarding the sun, the moon and the stars – and Yahweh! Once the stars have been reduced to darkness, the Lord roars, and His Voice makes the earth tremble. Finally, the Day of Yahweh becomes one of **consolation** for His People, for the Israelites. The People of God is in its refuge, for the Lord God dwells in Jerusalem.

c. The darkness of Golgotha in the light of the Day of the Lord: the reflections here have concentrated on certain prophetic texts which emphasize the darkness of the day in those hours when one would ordinarily expect the brilliant light of the sun. This phenomenon is presented in the background of what Scripture calls the Day of Yahweh. Prior to making some application of this revelation to the darkness of Golgotha [cf. Mk 15:33], described in terms reminiscent of the day of the Lord, there are two texts which offer certain indications of a certain sensibility to this theme in Mk. Perhaps the most clear text in this regard is the one which has already been pointed out as a witness to the phenomenon of darkness, in Mk 13:24, the evangelist's eschatological Discourse: ***...But in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken ...***

This verse introduces the pericope on the Coming of the Son of Man at the End of Time. Here, as in the last passage of the Prophet Joel considered here, there may be experienced a rather striking opposition between these grandeurs: involving the sun, the moon, the stars, the powers in the heavens which seem to be all humiliated, and darkened – and this Son of Man Who is coming, with great power and glory. **The Day of Yahweh is the day of the Son of Man.** It can likewise be stated that the verses which follow immediately after the account of the transfiguration implicitly call to mind the **Day of Yahweh**, employing the language of the **Resurrection** of the dead and the return of **Elijah**, which Mt 3:23 explicitly attaches to the **Day of Yahweh**. The presence of this same motif of Elijah, on the **Cross**, have encouraged some interpreter so f Mk 15:33 in the context of the Day of the Lord.

Without pretending to exhaust all the possibilities, it is helpful to ponder the mystery revealed in Mk 15:33 also from the perspective of the **Day of Yahweh** - and

its repeated descriptions in the OT Zeroing in a bit on Amos' message, in that it speaks of the darkness coming precisely at High Noon, some would maintain that believers are invited to contemplate the mystery of Golgotha as an intervention without any other biblical comparison of which God Himself, and He alone, takes the ultimate initiative. This sudden darkness is a direct act of God. Amos' presentation of the sudden mid-day darkness on the Day of Yahweh, as interpreted in the Gospel, is also seen by the Prophet as the poignant expression of bitterness, lamentation, of enormously profound grief having before the death of an only-begotten, most beloved child. From this perspective the Day of Yahweh, and consequently, Golgotha itself, in the measure that it is being identified with this image, would be presented as a frightful happening, a reality that is truly beyond description [cf. Am 5:18-20]. This is all so reminiscent to the coming Passion and particularly to that of Mk 8:31: **... And Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again and he said this quite openly...** This is the immediate sequel of Peter's magnificent Profession of faith, the high point of Mk's Gospel of Signs, leading then to three predictions of the Passion and Death, which Peter and the others did not care to accept.

Without repeating all the prophetic texts calling to mind the Day of Yahweh and allowing them to reveal the possible harmony with Golgotha, it would seem better to rivet more attention on another prophetic text which associates the phenomenon of the sudden darkness of the Day of Yahweh. This text is found in the Acts of the Apostles 2: 14, ff., clearly in the NT, thus providing a place of much importance at the very beginning of Peter's Inaugural Address, as it were, on Pentecost, imagery that the Prince of the Apostles uses to express the full bearing of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the light of the Prophet Joel, Golgotha is thereby associated with the great and awesome Day of Yahweh, a day on which God will give a demonstration of His infinite power: Joel's exclamation: **Oh, what a day!** [Jl 1:15] might be paraphrased here by Peter: **Alas! The Cross!** The importance of all that is unfolding at Golgotha would be explained as an alert which is meant to draw attention to this Event.

The believers must not in this context neglect to consider the prayer which in Joel, follows the first proclamation of the Day of Yahweh: **... To You, o Lord, I cry!** [Jl 1:19] - highly reminiscent to the Prayer of Jesus on Golgotha. This culminating Paschal Mystery seen in the light of Joel's Day of Yahweh, is an event that overwhelms the entire universe, which marks the taking of possession of the universe by God, the manifestation that He is the absolute Maser of all, eventually to be victorious over all the forces in opposition to Him. The Day of Yahweh, the Hour of Golgotha in the measure that these can be combined, is the place of the Divine Combat against the powers of evil. This is the place of God's Battle and that of His close followers against all which is opposed to Him. This is the terrestrial place of Final Judgment, of the condemnation of all which has risen up against God. However - this Place of the Last Judgment, at the same time, without lessening the time of sorrow, this likewise is the Place of God's Salvation and Redemption, that moment of the out-pouring [**ex-spiration**] of the Holy Spirit over all flesh, as Jl [3:1, ff.] will put it - this is the place where God is revealed as the ultimate Refuge for His People, leading

to the almost nuptial declaration: ***I am Yahweh, Your God!*** [Jl 4:17].

To contemplate Golgotha under the perspective of the Day of Yahweh means to consider it all as the unique work of God, as the absolutely determining intervention of God within His universe. This would mean to consider this mystery as the place of the decisive confrontation of God with all the powers of darkness in opposition to Him. Some would say that this is tantamount to saying that Golgotha is the place of concentration of expression of all human opposition to God, the culmination of the awesome Spiritual Combat of the Powers of Evil against God. Skeptics will always wonder how can this death on Golgotha mean that God is the Conqueror in this terrible fray. It is hard often for people of deep faith, to see the Folly of the Cross as the Wisdom of God, the awesome weakness of Jesus Christ, as the sign of God's power over darkness. Jesus pours forth His Spirit, sheds His last drop of blood through His Sacred Stigmata – however, God is not annihilated and this will be made clear by His resurrecting action proclaimed at the tomb: ***... There is no need for alarm. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He has risen, He is not here!*** [cf. Mk 16:6 – near the conclusion of the original close of Mk's Gospel prior to the added 'long ending']. From the biblical texts, **darkness** is often the indication of those Powers vanquished on Golgotha, dramatically compared to the thick darkness covering the earth.

On Golgotha, as well as in Amos' visions, and those of Joel and those other heralds of the Day of Yahweh, the calling to mind of the day of Judgment, of the condemnation of the powers of evil are inextricably tied in with the declaration of Salvation.



Reflections

[1] This study of the **Darkness** in the Synoptic accounts of the Cross lead interpreters to two avenues of contemplation, suggested by the OT tradition:

- the **three Hours of the Darkness on Golgotha** have some connection with the **three days of the Exodus darkness imposed** upon the Persecutors of God's Chosen People with Moses being the Spokesperson for God, Who accompanies His People in their **arduous desert journey of Redemption from slavery**;
- or, the three hours of **darkness** precisely beginning with **mid-day**, refer back to that darkness covering the whole earth at high noon – suggesting **cosmic repercussions** that Israel associated with the awesome manifestations of God in Salvation History. Using this as a spring-board for further contemplation of the into the decisive manifestation from which the believer awaits from God implying the end of all history, and wherein **God reveals Himself to be the ultimate Conqueror**.

[2] The formulation of Mk's text being studied here allows one to balance the various possible interpretations here Lk makes an explicit reference to a solar eclipse in the spirit of Am 8:9. For many readers of these passages, Mk 15:33 refers to the prophetic Day of Yahweh, finding its model, or type, in the experience of **Exodus**.

This seems to be one of Mk's characteristics in his account of Jesus' Death. There are a few elements that allow for a varied interpretation: on the one hand, there is much emphasis on Jesus' share in the human condition of weakness, with emphasis on the Redemptive Incarnation; there is also the implication that all who follow after Jesus are already in another world, that governed personally by God.

[3] There is some clear connection between the biblical presentation of the Day of Yahweh and the precision of Mk 15:33. The phenomenon of Darkness at mid-day goes back to Am 8:9. The insistence on the 'Great Cry' of Jesus and the reference to the Prophet Elijah, seem to suggest an event that surpasses the earthly horizon. Mk's verses following the wonder of the Transfiguration and the Eschatological Discourse in c. 13 show that the 2nd evangelist was well aware of the theme of the day of Yahweh. There is also implicit his familiarity with **Exodus** themes since the formulation of Mk 15:33 seems also marked by **the ninth plague of the Darkness of Exodus** [10:21-29]. Thus, there is less surprise in finding this phenomenon accompanying the event of Redemption from Slavery brought into the fore in the revelation of Jesus' identity. This recollection of Moses in the Transfiguration, following the introduction Elijah – brings forward rich OT themes. Some of these elements are likewise present in Jesus' Baptism in Mk [1:9-11]. This passage of Mk comes to close to Ex 2:11. The waters and the heavens serve as a kind of echo of Is 63:7-64, and even more so to Is 63:19. This is a **New Exodus** suggested also in earlier times to the People of God. The reference of Jesus as 'Son', in v. 11, surely has some connection with the privileged situation of the People whom God chose and entrusted to Moses – referred to as God's Child.

[4] The 'Great Cry' of Golgotha, '**Eloi, Eloi...!**' is then clarified. In the measure in which the Darkness of Golgotha bring together the frightful clash of the Powers of Darkness with the Light of the World, in which God comes out as the Victor. On Golgotha, the earlier sign of a frightful upheaval against God is here directed against Jesus Christ and rains down upon the Son of God Who shares fully in human destiny. This awesome conflict becomes visible in the human being Who suffers here in all human ways possible. Subjected to the considerable destructive forces of evil and darkness, Jesus manifests powerless impotence, and is revealed as sharing in human nature and heavy burdens of sorrow, weakness, powerlessness and ultimately, death itself.

[5] On this level, the Cry of Jesus is interpreted for the believer [cf. Mk 15:34] only confirms that the powers of evil and darkness have ultimate repercussion on the Person of Jesus hanging on the Tree of the Accursed – these powers both reach Him, and destroy His human life. The Great Cry of Golgotha on the lips of Jesus reveal Him to be the One Who takes upon Himself this concentration of the Powers of Darkness that settle upon God. These are so real and so overwhelming that Jesus cries out in the words of Ps 22 the cry of His profound suffering – all the while in this Canticle of Ultimate Hope, Jesus professes that God is living, and that He is victorious over His own enemies. The Darkness on the Day of Yahweh predict the most awesome moment for the destructive forces, all those powers in opposition, of negation – implying the 'Death of God.' Christ's agonizing cry shows that God has not died, He is alive, and He will show His ultimate victory over the Darkness through the

Light of the Dawn of the Day of the Resurrection.

[6] The Darkness of the Day of Yahweh, as like the agony of a father for his only child's death [cf. Am 8:10] – this prediction offers its substance to the events of Golgotha, and it comes across as Jesus 'experiencing' a certain abandonment by the living God. Through the clear sign of thick Darkness, the father grieves for his only child. The Darkness helps us to understand a variety of details which in the formulation of Mk 15:34-37, invite us to concentrate on the Great Cry of Jesus: Joel's ***Alas The Day!*** [Jl 1:15] indicates that God is indeed at work as is manifesting Himself as the Great Conqueror and that each element of this account ought to clarify for the believer the unique manner in which God achieves His resounding victory.

[7] Mk 15:33, therefore, for many interpreters relies on an element of description which brings Golgotha close to the Day of Yahweh [Mk 15:33] in the re-presentation of the signs and prodigies worked in behalf of Israel, to overwhelm their earlier persecutors, in the crossing of the Sea of Reeds in **Exodus**. Ws 17 has helped in this interpretation: without an explicit reference to the Day of Yahweh, the text does testify to the fact that it was already known in the first century of the Christian era, at least in certain Hellenistic-Jewish settlements, these re-readings of the sacred memories of ancient Israel, such as is described in the 9th Plague of the Exodus, that even then at their original occurrence, were opened to the unknown future. In the NT period, a book like the **Apocalypse** formulates the expected definitive future of God with the help of the OT Book of the **Exodus** and the oft-recurring theme of **darkness** [RV. 8:12; 16:10]. It could be added to this observation that already in Joel, as many think, the calamity described in c. 1, and the attacking army described in c. 2, correspond to an onslaught of locusts, this would lead many to think of the recurrence of the 8th **Plague** in the **Exodus**, and this would establish the very strong bond with the theme of the Day of Yahweh.

[8] Thus, read in the special harmony with Exodus, the Great Cry of Mk 15:34 offers a further insight into Mk 15:33. At the same time that these circumstances precede the death of the First-Born of Egypt, plus the putting to death of the Innocent Children, places one before an unparalleled calamity. This can be seen as a kind of reprobation by God, touching the very fabric of Israel's fate. With Hosea, one can find the title of the Most Beloved Son of God [Ho 11:1], His Son being called up out of the land of captivity. Thus, going back to the 9th Plague of Darkness over Israel in Exodus, this shows the great care that God does take of His only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son – how God protects this Son against His enemies, how He shows Himself to be 'His God', Who will never totally abandon His Most Beloved.

[9] With regard to the symbolism of Exodus, the Jesus Who cries from the Cross is entitled as follows:

- He is **the First Born, the Innocent One**, sacrificed in order to spare the entire people, but to death to change the hearts of the enemies of the People. This is one of those corpses of the Apocalypse [11:8] into Whom God breathes life. The book describes the new life of Jerusalem which crucified its own Lord and Savior, and there, new life comes to this humanity that had lived in opposition to the God revealed in Jesus Christ;

- Jesus is also the **Most Beloved Son of God**, and so, He is the One Who represents the People whom Yahweh has cherished, whom He saves at every cost, who had made cross over the water in order to be admitted to communion with Him. The First Born of the persecutors was delivered up for the multitude [Mk 10:45; 14:24] – and Israel, cherished of God, as the Most Beloved, Only-Begotten Son. His Great Cry from the Cross: **ELOI, ELOI, ...** seems to be the cry of the First-Born of the persecutors, the death of whom permits that the liberating will of God might be able to be exercised in behalf of Israel, or as the Great Cry of the Most Beloved Son, reduced to slavery. His arms outstretched, He appeals for an imminent delivery, and this does not have the same resonance.

[10] There are unique circumstances on Golgotha: the Crucified One is the natural Son of God, identified with some of the traits of Moses. He is also the First-Born whose death permits the persecutors, the enemy of God, to say 'yes', to the Plan of God and, at the same time, to become the **authentic Israel**, with Whom God draws up His New Covenant of Mercy. In this New Covenant, then, the Persecutors, or enemies of God, i.e., that humanity which crucified Jesus Christ, has reiterated convincingly its 'no' to God's Plan in Jesus Christ. In this same Covenant of Mercy, Israel, i.e., that humanity which in Jesus has passed through the waters, and was baptized with the same Baptism with which He is baptized [Mk 10:38], and through its 'yes' to God's Plan in Jesus, also says 'yes' to God. The Great Cry of Jesus, **Eloi, Eloi...!** - pertains here to that plunge into the threatening waters, in the experience of that death bound to the acceptance of Jesus to live in a human life, the life of the Only Son, even to the very last end, consuming the dregs of His 'Cup'; given to Him by His Father. For this who perseveres unto the end, this will enable all to pray with Jesus' Own Prayer: ***My God, My God... Our Father, Abba!***

[11] Golgotha is the revelation of the identity of Jesus and of the God of Jesus, in the **Darkness**. The **Transfiguration**, the **revelation** of the identity of Jesus and of the God of Jesus, in the light. On **Golgotha**, there is **the silence of the Father**, but there is **the Word of Divine Son** identifying His **relationship** to His Heavenly Father. At the Transfiguration, there is **the silence of the Son**, and the **Word of the Father identifying** His Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son, in Whom He is well pleased! Thus, Jesus cries out with Psalm 22: ***My God, My God – why have You abandoned Me?*** And yet, Yahweh ***is King! Let earth rejoice, the many isles be glad! Cloud and Darkness surround Him. Righteousness and justice support His Throne...!*** [Ps 97:1, ff.].

... and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, He said: 'Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit...' [Lk 23:46; Ps 31: 5].



E. THE TEARING OF THE TEMPLE VEIL [Mk 15:38] – and His Tunic that was not torn¹⁰¹

...And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom...



Presentation

1. The Veil of the Temple of Jerusalem
2. Key of Interpretation
 - a. Mk in General
 - b. Mk 11-12
 - c. Mk 13-15: in the Passion
 - d. The verb of *tearing* [*schizomai*]
 - [1] Baptism in Jn
 - [2] Baptism in Mk
3. Caiphas
 - Other NT Writings
 - a. Mt 27:51
 - b. Lk 23:45
 - a. Hebrews
 - b. The Pierced Side of Jesus
 - c. Mk compared with Mt, Lk, Heb, Jn
4. The Sign of the Torn Veil
 - a. The Temple made by human hands
 - b. The Temple not made by Human Hands
 - c. Again, the Baptism and the opened sky

Reflections



Presentation

[1] Throughout the entire web of Mk's account of the Crucifixion, ending in the death of Jesus Christ [Mk15:34-37], there is a strong suggestion that the world of beyond seems to have been rendered mute. The deafening other worldly silence is broken by the Great Cry of Jesus in which He expresses His own mysterious experience of having been abandoned by God. On earth, there is a total misunderstanding of the Divine 'Abandonment' - with Christ's appeal to His Father, the by-standers that it is to Elijah. And yet, the two signs of the **three hours of darkness** and the **torn veil** seem to imply a certain active presence of God.

[2] The **three Hours of Darkness** are an ancient sign of the Presence of God – yet, these seem to be an indication of the powerlessness of God before what is taking place on Golgotha. Jesus' extended hands on the Cross are certainly reminiscent of Moses' extended hands [cf. Ex 10:21] as God prepares to intervene. The 'language of the darkness' seems to serve as a reminder that in reading these passages, the OT connections cannot be forgotten: one can never overlook the abandonment to death of the beloved first-born of the persecutors, side by side with the salvation granted to the People of The Promise – and the abandonment of Jesus to death - are all elements of salvation. The facts invite the believer to measure to what point is the solidarity of Jesus, restored to life in the Resurrection, and the

¹⁰¹ Lorraine, CAZA, *Mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné* . o.c., pp. 195-228.

breathing of life into the corpses – perhaps referring to the terrifying experience of abject fear of which the pitch bleakness is both the symbol and the cause [Ws 17].

[3] The Darkness proclaims an unparalleled intervention on the part of God, a taking of possession by God of the entire universe and therefore, a subjection of all lights, of all the suns, moons and stars within this world in the presence of such a startling divine majesty The Darkness is a language expressing that Golgotha in some way is tied in with the ultimate definitive victory of God over all the Powers of Darkness, Evil, and therefore - over all that does not offer its 'yes' to God in the living out of His Covenant of Mercy.

[4] In the measure their procedure is correct, in that exegetes connect Mk 15:33 to the **Exodus [the 9th Plague]**, to **Ws 17**, to the **Prophetic teaching** regarding the **Day of Yahweh**, the unmistakable sign of **Darkness** appears undeniably as an indication that the silence of God was broken at Golgotha. It seems that the phenomenon of the miraculous Tearing **of the Temple Veil** at the death of Jesus is one more indication in symbolic language of the mysterious action of God on Golgotha.



1. The Temple Veil of Jerusalem: without delaying much on the material reality of this Veil, the Scriptures make clear that it was rent from top to bottom at the death of Jesus. However, it needs to be noted that none of the Synoptics – while they all speak of the Veil being torn - none of them make very clear concerning which Temple Veil it is a question: there was a kind of curtain separating the sanctuary of the exterior part, or the Veil that was hung within the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. There are scholars, of course, who maintain both views. The situation of the oldest texts that have come down to us make it impossible to judge beyond any doubt. Flavius Joseph, in his *The War of the Jews* [Book 5], has provided a rather detailed description of the large curtain that hung in the ancient vestibule:

... the Sanctuary contained in the interior two consecutive parts, with only the first one exposed to view, and it reached all the way to the ceiling without interruption. This height attained 90 cubits, its length measuring about 50, and width about 20. The portal through which one entered was entirely covered with gold, as was the wall around it. It was decorated with golden vines, from which hung clusters of grapes, all about the measure of a man. There were golden doors about 55 feet tall and 11 feet wide, before which there was hung a veil of jacinth, very fine linen, scarlet and purple in color, of admirable work. Besides this, there was a mixture of materials not without symbolic value: this resented the image of the universe. The scarlet seemed to allude to fire, to the end of the earth; the jacinth represented the air, and the purple the sea. For the scarlet and the jacinth, because of the similarity of colors, for the linen and the purple, was due to their origin. One was produced by the earth, and the other by the sea. On the tapestry, there was embroidered a complete map of the sky, except for the signs of the Zodiac ...

For some, this description by Josephus of the great veil of the Temple, scholars note that it is quite similar to the description provided by Philo in his Biography of Moses. However, even more importantly this symbolism was united to the texture of the Temple Veil, and that it offered a very good representation of the universe. The presentation by the historian of those motifs designed on the Veil offer a good representation of the sky above. With regard to Mk's description of the Veil, the detail he offers is at least interesting. Some scholars believe that there can be found there the description left by Sirach 50: 1-21 of the ancient High Priest, Simon. These following verses with their celestial imagery are particularly interesting:

... How splendid he was with the people thronging around him, when he emerged from the Curtained Shrine, like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon at the full, like the sun shining on the Temple of the Most High, like the rainbow gleaming against brilliant clouds ... [vv. 5-7].

As the **Darkness** treated above, this Curtained Shrine, seem to convey a theological message. Much like the overwhelming Darkness, that of the Tearing of the Veil of the Temple of Jerusalem seems to convey a negative connotation, at least at first glance. The light of day which fades, something of the sacred reality of the Temple is here shaken: it seems that we are confronted here with language referring to some kind of a supra-human intervention. This would be an intervention which, in making some response to the wonder of the 'silence' of God in the terrible events of Golgotha, remits to God an action which might corroborate the impression of Divine Abandonment, the dereliction of His Only-Begotten, Most beloved Son [cf. Mk 15:34-37]: *... let us wait and see if Elijah will come and take Him down...!*

As a result, it would be no wonder that this motif of the Torn Veil, as the other motifs already contemplated, might bring forward deeper significance:

- taking as the point of departure the formulations in Mk 15:38: **... the Temple veil was rent from top to bottom...** - there are three usual avenues of interpretation that might help the committed believer to resolve somewhat the great enigma that has always been attached to this sign of the Rending of the Veil of the Temple:

- the text speaks about the Veil of the **Temple** - reflecting on this theme in the 2nd Gospel could open up possibilities of shedding some light on the matter;

- as the word used describes a tearing, a rending of the veil [*schizomai*] it would be very advantageous to compare this to the tearing open of the Heavens, at the Baptism of Jesus Christ;

- however, this same verb is used to describe the rending of the garments of the Great High-Priest during Jesus' trial.

- maintaining always the purpose of better discerning the message of Mk, we might note whether **the motif of the Veil in Mt and Lk** is treated in the identical manner - and then, what significance would the unknown author of the **Document to the Hebrews** give to this in the using of the motif of the Veil in his theological synthesis –

and lastly, then to see **the theme in John**, whether he, too, in some manner has contribute to this stream of thought.

2. The Key of Interpretation in the Gospel of Mark:

a. **The Temple in Mk's Gospel in general:** it simply cannot be taken for granted that the motifs of the Temple Veil and that of the Temple itself are interchangeable. The student may not, therefore, conclude without further research that when the text states that 'the Temple Veil was torn', this is the same as saying: 'the entire Temple was devastated.' The apocryphal literature contains, however, some references to a torn veil which does not seem totally extraneous to implying a total destruction. However, this does not prove anything about the texts in Scripture.

Nonetheless, there do exist strong possibilities that one entry in the consideration of the Temple which Mk attributes to Jesus might furnish us with possible indications for the interpretation of Mk 15:38. The temple in Mk is the **House of God** [Mk 11:17 a, a citation from Is 56:7] – it is a **sacred place**, in Mk 14:49; it is in Mk 13:14, at the moment when the author was recalling a profanation which is not easy to understand, states simply: **...When you see the disastrous abomination ...** - without daring to go any further in mentioning precisely what it was. In the Passion account, the term used [*naos*¹⁰²] seems to be the one consecrated to call to mind the sanctuary of the temple, i.e., the **Holy of Holies** - while the word **hieron** would have been employed for the entire confines of the Temple.

All the references to the Temple in Mk are situated within the ministry of Judea, beginning in c. 11. In Mk 2:16, it is a question of the Dwelling Place of God [*oikos* as in the citation from Is 56:7 in Mk 11:17 a]. However, the text refers to that which the Bible relates on the subject of David and of those men following him [cf. 1 S 21:2-7]. Now the House of God of which there is a discussion here is that of Nob, where the Priesthood of Silo had taken refuge, after the event recounted in 1 S 4. This recollection of a tradition going back to David's time, in the back-drop of the discussion regarding the Sabbath [cf. Mk 2:23-3:6] – which suggests clearly a taking up of a position on the part of Jesus with regard to a discipline of a House of God - serves as a prelude of some sort to that which the ministry of Judea is going to reveal regarding Jesus' attitude concerning the Temple.

b. **The Temple in Mk 11-12:** three separate times Jesus is presented as coming to the temple, and these visits are situated on three consecutive days:

- on the occasion of His entrance into the Temple, which follows a messianic procession of which the festive celebrations seem more to be bound to the country-like atmosphere of Bethphage rather than at Jerusalem. One receives the rather enigmatic impression that Jesus simply looked at all that He found in the Temple before going back to Bethany: **... Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the**

¹⁰² This means many things in the NT: [a] **the physical temple** [Mk 14:58 a]; [b] the **body** of the Christian man or woman, either as an individual, or the community as a whole [1 Cp 3:16, ff.; 2 Co 6:16; Ep 2:21]; [c] The heavenly, eschatological temple [cf. 1 Th 2:4; Ap 11:19; 14:15, ff.].

Temple. He looked all round Him, but as it was now late, He went out to Bethany with the 12... [Mk 11:11].

- on the next day, according to Mk [11:15-19], Jesus proceeds to a rather violent act in the temple. The teaching which, according to the text, is joined to His rather dramatic actions, provide clearly the impression that the Jesus of Mark is disgusted with the use that is being made of the Temple, and therefore, also of its cult. For what should be a **House of Prayer** for all the people, has been made into a place where one can escape from justice, such as God would understand it – it would be a place comparable to a hide-out for criminals who would make their way there to escape the law. It is therefore important to connect this v. 17 not only to Is 56:7 – but, it should also be tied in with the great attack of Jeremiah against the first Temple of Jerusalem [cf. Jr 7] – and especially to Jr 7:11, where the Greek rendition is quite precise: ***... Now go to my place in Shiloh where at first I gave My name a home; see what I have done to it because of the wickedness of My People, Israel...!***

- a third entrance into the temple [cf. Mk 11:27-12:44] is offered as the back-drop for a confrontation of Jesus with the different groups of His opponents: the high priests, the scribes and the elders put His Divine authority over the Temple under question [cf. Mk 11:27-33]. The Pharisees and the Herodians try, for their own confusion, to trip Him up in His attitude with regard to the occupying power [Mk 12: 13-17]. The Sadducees try to cover Him with ridicule for His teachings on the resurrection.

It could be stated that the over-all message of Mk 11-12 might leave the reader under the very strong impression of a rather unfavorable attitude of Jesus, not so much regarding the Temple itself as the manner in which His contemporaries considered the temple for their own expressions of belief. The most able procedure as evidenced by Mk has inserted Jesus' rather violent reaction, in the second of His two visits to the Temple inscribed in these two chapters of Mark, between the two pieces of the scene of the withered fig tree. This implies that for Jesus, the sterile fig tree which has not produced as all had a right to expect it would really is a figure of the temple, and that system of which the Temple was the expression. Some scholars believed that in addition to the parable of the most beloved son who would go into the vineyard of his father in order to gather the fruit, and who would be put to death – has the value of a confirmation of the deeper meaning of the episode of the withered fig tree.

c. The Temple in Mk 13 and in the Passion Narrative [14-15]: these three chapters present passages where there is the discussion on the destruction and the reconstruction of the Temple, but the three references to a destruction of the Temple do not coincide well among themselves. In the announcement attributed to Jesus that the Temple [*hieron*] would be destroyed [Mk 13:1-2], He does not claim that He personally would be the perpetrator of the destruction and that there is not the discussion of its reconstruction. The recalling to mind of the installation of the abomination of the Desolation [cf. Mk 13:14] clearly refers back to Dn 11, and announces the calamities which are centered around the ruin of the Temple, point toward the temple while carefully avoiding the explicit naming of it.

Within the Passion account, Jesus will be accused twice of having said that He would destroy the Temple [*naos*]: in His Trial, before the High Priest Caiphas [14:58] and on the Cross [15:29]. The accusation was more developed during His Trial: Jesus would have said that He would destroy the Temple, made by human hands, and in three days, another would be built up, not made by human hands. This accusation was presented within the Trial itself. Both in Mk 14:57, or under a less heavily weighted accusation in Mk 14:59, is qualified as a false testimony. Even the by-standers, or those passing by the Cross, took up this accusation under the form of bitter irony [Mk 15:29] – but it is not made clear whether the Temple that would appear would be a temple of a different nature than the one that was destroyed.

As some scholars have noted it is not an easy matter to fathom the depths of Mk 13-15 to see what would have been Jesus' actual statement on the basis of the accusations that are leveled against Him as conveying His true attitude concerning the Temple. It is not easy any further to identify this Temple, *not made by human hands*, of which Jesus would be the artisan, the architect. Serious scholars of these passages note that if we put side by side all the affirmations of Mk's views regarding the temple, except for those of Mk 14:58; 15:29, 38, we would conclude with the idea that Jesus had manifested opposition to the Temple, and to the contemporaries of His own generation who would be more identified as connected with the Temple, and that he had predicted the destruction of the Temple.

Mk's account of the Passion seems more concerned with allowing us to fathom the relationship between the end of the Temple, and Jesus' Mission. However, if we ponder it more closely we might also note that there is a bond existing between each one of these texts presenting the motif of the Temple and **the Christological message of the Gospel**. It would suffice to contemplate:

- the Christological acclamation prior to His entry into the Temple [Mk 11:9-11: ... ***Hosannah! Blessings on Him Who comes in the Name of the Lord...***!];
- the Christological discussion that took place right in the Temple [Mk 12:35-37];
- the fact that the declaration that not a single stone would remain on another, is followed then by the warning regarding the false messiahs [Mk 13:1-6];
- then a question on the identity of Jesus follows immediately upon the accusation before Caiphas [Mk 14:61, ff.];
- then, the mockery leveled at Him of a Christological nature that follow the mockery regarding the destruction of the Temple [Mk 15:29];
- and finally, even the tearing of the temple Veil [Mk 15:38] is followed then by a Christological confession on the part of the Roman centurion.

Situated in this assembly of references to the Temple in Mk, the Veil of the temple is rent at the death of Jesus. This dramatic event seems to recapitulate in some manner the declarations that Jesus made regarding the Temple. It seems to presage a certain destruction, the end of the world, of which the Temple is the symbol, and to announce the appearance of a totally new reality, a new construction. In the light of that which we have said, the motif of the Torn Veil ought to render us

vigilant to seek out a better grasp of the Christological revelation with which this is all associated. One might contemplate the Centurion's Confession, and in this connection, to ask furthermore whether the tie that is established in that which some scholars see as a Christian interpolation from the *Testament of Benjamin*, **between** the Torn Veil and the passing of the Spirit over upon the people. All of this seems to be witnessed by the interpretation of the sign of the Torn Veil. This has long been part of the integral Christian proclamation.

d. **Mk's use of the verb *schizomai*: to tear, to rend**: another thread of supreme interest is opened up for us within the Gospel of Mk, for a better penetration into the mystery of the Torn Veil. In the Crucifixion account, it is the verb *schizomai* which is employed in order to express the rending of the Temple Veil. This present account is not the only passage where this verb appears in Mk: - It is used for the **rending of the heavens** at Jesus' **Baptism** by John the Baptist. The interest that this evokes is to rivet our attention on this language detail which leads the careful reader a second time to note the connection between **the Death of Jesus** – and **the Baptism of Jesus**. This tie comes from the Gospel itself, suggesting the connection between Jesus' Death and Baptism: ... ***Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I must be baptized ...?*** [Mk 10:38]. However, these affinities of vocabulary between the scene of Jesus **Baptism** and that of the **Cross** are not limited to the common employ of the verb *schizomai*. The two scenes speak the language of something being **torn open**, in one case for the appearance of the **Spirit** [appearing as a Dove]; and in the second for the Divine Voice [***This is MY Beloved Son...***]. This does not seem coincidental.

These parallels seem to be evident in the two scenes:

- at the Baptism, the heavens are torn open – whereas on Golgotha, it is the Veil of the Temple which is rent;
- at the Baptism, the **Spirit** appears like a Dove Who descends down upon Jesus, at the moment that He comes up out of the water – at Golgotha, there is described the **ex-spiration** of Jesus, i.e., the word used is most reminiscent for exegetes as a 'hidden' mention of **the coming of the Spirit at the death of Jesus**;
- at the Baptism, a Voice proclaims from the heavens above that this is the Beloved Son of the Heavenly Father. As the heavens are torn open, the Voice from on high are presented with the object of **seeing, looking at** Jesus. On Golgotha, Jesus utters His 'Great Cry' that issues from on high, the Cross: ***My God, My God...***! expressing His continuing tie with the heavenly Father.

Once these similarities are assembled, some interpreters are gradually led spontaneously perhaps in these cases, to discover another parallel which is most startling. This is more than the common usage of vocabulary, but is more in the development of the two scenes. At the Baptism, there may be noted a certain **identification of Jesus as Most Beloved Son**, and this is proclaimed from the heavens above. On Golgotha, there may be noted once the Temple Veil is torn open, the **identification of Jesus as the Son of God**, proceeding from the lips of one on duty at the foot of the Crucified One, the Roman Centurion. This identification of a

proclamation of the Divine Son comes forth from the non-Jewish world. In the scene of Jesus' death, there is a kind of contrasting parallel: as at the Baptism Jesus is **proclaimed the Divine Son** – a profession of faith then on Golgotha for the Roman Soldier – Jesus makes His **proclamation of the Divinity, regarding His Father: *My God, My God*** - in a canticle of hope that God will never forget the poverty of the Just, Poor Man [Ps 22].

These parallels and corresponding ideas that seem to flow for the careful reader from the comparison of these two scenes of the Baptism and the Cross, multiply the reasons for contemplating ever more deeply these two scenes, revealing the Redemption of the world. This will be the effort here:

[1] Jesus' Baptism in John: this theme calls to the fore a discussion on the situation of Palestinian Judaism in the first Christian century, with particular reference to the Baptist Phenomenon. In the period between the OT and the NT, in Judaism and throughout the Hellenistic world, there was a kind of proliferation of a movement emphasizing ritual purity. This movement had at its source, a rather wide-spread 'thirst for salvation', an intense need for religious expression that developed everywhere. In the bosom of Judaism, more particularly, a number of groups sprang up noted and distinguished by their relationship to one another and the importance they gave to water rituals. The Pharisaical inspiration was toward a strict obedience to prescriptions, due to their inbred conviction that the entire Jewish People were 'Priestly', following Ex 19:6: a royal and consecration nation of Priests. One of these prescriptions was the frequent water ablutions. The Sect at Qumran has been much unearthed through much archeological research that has brought forward a richness of terminology, as well as water reserves, showing that there were special baths for this purpose. The ritual of purification was practically exasperated with all their attention and legislation centering on water!

In the almost universal fever for purification, there appeared in Judaism the so-called 'Baptism Ritual of Proselytes' which did not make any claim of incorporating into the Jewish community as the ritual of circumcision was believed to do. Rather, it was a ceremony, a gesture which at a certain moment in the life of the people, made them the group of 'God-fearers'. It was needed that the candidates would express their desire to be proselytes, and the ritual was imagined that it was wash away all ritual impediments that might have become attached to the 'God-fearers'. As they were mostly coming from the non-believing world, and thus were considered to be 'ritually impure', unworthy to participate in Israel's worship. There is not much agreement on the precise date when this movement began - there are serious scholars who hold it was pre-Christian in its origin, and that it might have been behind the ritual of baptism such as John the Baptist conferred. The existence of the baptism of purification was quite spread by the time of the second Christian century and it bears rather eloquent witness to the mounting fervor for this ritual purification by water.

In this context the many 'Baptist movements', and most likely that of John the Baptist as presented by Mk [1:9], seem to have some of the implications surpassing greatly the promotion of the ritual purifications by water. They assumed marked

indications with regard to the Judaism of the time on a number of realities quite connected to the Jewish identity. In the provisory synthesis made by scholars promoting this interpretation of Jesus' own times, some characteristics coming to the fore seem to be verified:

- first of all, a certain importance was given to the role of the baptizer – he could not, for example, baptize himself – and this ritual established then a link between the one carrying out the ritual and the disciples who would be joined to him by their baptism. John's ritual does not imply that the adherents to his ritual would be set apart, or isolated – but, they became people of communion, moved to enter into greater communication with other adherents;
- the conviction shared moreover with the Pharisees and the community of Qumran, that the physical bath would never supply for the required conversion of heart – furthermore the ritual was needed with the conversion and for the forgiveness of sin;
- a certain distancing themselves with regard to a formalistic rigorism in the observance of the Law and with regard to a certain limitless confidence in the system in vogue in the Temple, in the world of bloody sacrifices in the Temple;
- intimately bound to this required distancing, was the concept of a universal salvation, not so much in the sense of an extension to all the people recognized as 'priestly' of those ritual prescriptions required of consecrated priests – but, rather, in the sense much more broad to an appeal to conversion and to baptism addressed to all the people, and, as it seems to many scholars today, even to non-Israelites.

As a result of all this research in recent years, the following scholarly description, definition, of the ritual of this type of baptism has emerged: we call 'baptism' those movements of a religious awakening, in the popular milieu especially, which proclaim the imminence of the eschatological judgment, appealing already to salvation through conversion of heart and the ritual of immersion in flowing water, with a view to the pardon of sins. This 'baptist' ritual of salvation was addressed to all and it was accessible to everyone, beyond all the barriers of purity. In so far as it was a ritual of pardon, it would not be too far distant from other cultic rites for the expiation of sin, especially those that had permeated the Hellenistic world of the first century, especially through the refusal of many to take part in any radical bloody sacrifices in the temples.

At the threshold of Mk's Gospel, therefore, Jesus is simply presented in this context of this Baptist movement of the John, bearing that title. Later on in Mk's Gospel [10:38], some scholars have wondered whether in the redemptive episode of the Cross, i.e., the sign of the torn Temple Veil, surely is not presented as a mere radicalization of the distancing required with regard to the system in vogue in the Temple, of which some 'baptists' were the promoters, and thus explaining Jesus' rather violent reaction [cf. Mk 11:15-19]. The usual reading here is that the beautiful confession of the Roman Centurion is not to be reduced merely as a perfect

illustration of all that the 'baptist movement' contained as its interior ideal, promising a 'salvation' going from a 'God-fearer' to a 'Child of God', such as the soldier proclaimed Jesus to be.

The sign of the torn Temple Veil, that occurred precisely at the instant of Jesus' death, of His Baptism with its declaration of Divine Filiation, is paralleled to some extent with Jesus' declaration of the Paternal Divinity of the One Who sent Him. These parallels invite us not so much as a Great Cry independent from the radical reorientation given by Jesus to the intuition regarding the frequent water ablutions, all touching on the world of the Temple and the whole system of life, of which the temple serves as a central symbol.

[2] Jesus' Baptism in Mk's Gospel: the simple fact of Jesus' Baptism in Jn is itself a message regarding Jesus, a manner of situating Him in the world of His time, which Mk adopts at the beginning of his testimony. But, there is more - going back to Mk's Baptismal scene which has led the careful reader to contemplating the Baptism scene in the light of the scene on the Cross. In Mk, this draws attention to one central revelation made regarding Jesus: it is here that He 'sees' the heavens which are torn asunder and the voice expresses His divine identity.

The heavens are described as torn asunder, with the Holy Spirit Who descends upon Jesus, recalling to the students' recollection the great Psalm of supplication which is found in III-Is [63:7-64:11]:

... Truly, they are My People, sons and no rogues. He proved Himself their Savior ... In His love and pity, He redeemed them Himself ... They remembered the days of old, of Moses, His servant. Where is He Who brought out of the sea the shepherd of His flock? Where is He Who endowed Him with His Holy Spirit who at the right hand of Moses set to work with His glorious arm, who divided [tore asunder?] the waters before them... Oh that you would tear the heavens open and come down - at Your Presence, the mountains would melt ... See, see, we are Your People...

The first part of this great epic poem [Is 63:7-14] is consecrated to recalling the marvels of God during the first **exodus**. In the heart of this celebration of the divine benefits, there is found at the beginning of the supplication, under the form of a question some familiar details of yester-year.

When one ponders the Baptism of Jesus, it speaks of the heavens which are torn asunder, the Spirit descends upon Jesus as He 'comes up out of the water' -it is difficult not to connect here that Mk presents us in Jesus the full realization of the expectancy expressed in the Grand Poem of Is [63:7-64:11]. Therefore, for Mk, Jesus is the One in Whom there is seen this future intervention of God called for by this text, He will be the One in Whose Person there is incarnated this reality of a people for whom God is their Savior [63:8]. His 'face' has saved them in all their anguish, the members of this Chosen People, whom He has ransomed in His love and pity. He is in charge of them, and has carried them all the past days [63:9]

This God Who carries His 'own' renders them in sharp contrast with the idolaters, who have to carry their 'gods' with them in their flight [cf. Is 46:3]. The references to the first **Exodus** in the Baptism of Jesus as presented by Mk, seems to have come to him through this Grand Poem of Is 63, Some would also tie all this in with Gn1:2, the Spirit hovering over the waters – or Ex 19; Dt 32:11, the giant Eagle bearing the lowly people on His wings.

The Divine Proclamation through the heavens torn asunder is: ***This is MY Beloved Son...!*** This corresponds well to the presentation of God throughout the Great Psalm of Is 63, f.:

... for the great kindness He has shown us in His Mercy... He lifted them up, carried them, throughout the days of old... The Spirit of Yahweh led them to rest ... You, Yahweh, Yourself are our Father. Our Redeemer is Your Ancient Name ... No ear has heard, no eye has seen any god but You act like this...!

This cannot all be pure coincidence that immediately after the passage of Jesus through the waters, the Evangelist shows the Spirit Who comes to descend upon Him, 'pushing Him' out into the desert, toward His Trials with Satan: ***Immediately afterwards the Spirit drove Him out into the wilderness and He ... was tempted by Satan...*** [Mk 1:12, f.]. He remained 40 days. It is from the OT that we receive the revelation of the experienced of the Chosen People in the harsh desert of trial. The 'D' Tradent has well expressed the motifs of the desert, trial, savage beasts:

... The Lord your God, led you for 40 years in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you... to know your inmost heart ... He was training you as a man trains his child... [cf. Dt 8].

The affinities between Mk 1:12, f. and Dt 8 especially have also the implication of placing the Desert Trial under the ultimate horizon of benevolent solicitude of god for His very own, Mk 1:13 also brings in to its succinct description of Jesus' experience in the desert the two motifs of **savage beasts** and the service of the **Angels**. It seems that this pairing involves various levels of the created universe, as well as serving as a symbol in order to express the divined solicitude in a situation of trial. The beautiful Psalm [91] of Confidence joins these motifs:

... No disaster can overtake you, no plague come near your tent; He will put you in His angels' charge, to guard you wherever you go. They will support you on their hands, incase you hurt your foot against a stone; you will tread on lion and adder, trample on savage lions and dragons...

This angelic assistance also serves as the vehicle to convey the 'otherness' of the divine protection, as appears in a number of biblical passages, as Ex 23:20: ***... I Myself will send an angel before you...*** This, too, was a desert experience. The text noted above [Is 63] likewise refers to an angel: ***... It was neither messenger, nor angel, but His Presence saved them...!*** [v. 9]. Different from Lk [4:13], Mk does not offer any explicit tie between the desert trial on the Eve, the Threshold of His Mission and that of His Passion. However, it is difficult not to see the Trial in the Desert in which the 'Accuser', Satan, is present and that which the Pharisees and the

Herodians impose upon Him [Mk 8:11; 10:2; 12:15]. In a certain manner, Jesus' Desert Experience is understood as a time of Trial, as a time of His confrontation with enemy forces - but, at the same time, it is also a time of very special protection of God. All of this, at the beginning and then at the end of His Mission presented by the Synoptics, the Desert and then the Garden serve as a kind of biblical *enclosure* serving as a symbol, the image, the summit of His entire Mission.

This Mission of Jesus culminating in His Passion and Resurrection, His suffering expressed in His Great Cry from the Cross, in some way finds its counterpart in the One Whom Jesus had 'seen', the One Who sent Him, Who proclaims: ***This is My Son, the Beloved...!***

As a result of all these exegetical insights, Jesus' experiences of His Baptism and the Desert serve as symbols of His entire Mission, and of its summit, the Cross and resurrection. At the very outset of his Gospel, Mk offers an image of Jesus recapitulating in some manner in His Person, the experience of the **New Exodus**, referred to by the people as a situation of Trial [cf. Is 63:7-64:11]. One image that projects much light on this Passion and on His Death and Resurrection might be noted in the **Baptism** [Mk 10:38]: an insertion for all of us into the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ [Rm 6]. The Great Cry of Mk 15:34 expresses precisely most profoundly the reality of this immersion into the waters, and the coming up out of them as a symbol of the Resurrection. Thus, the skies torn asunder provide us both assurance from the heavenly Father as to Jesus' true mysterious identity as the Beloved Son – and access is given to us into the open heavens above by His Paschal Mystery, bringing us salvation.

The Great Cry of Mk 15:34 also conveys to us some understanding of the enormous price of His being put to the test by the Accuser, and of His confrontation with the hostile forces in the desert. The horizon opened up by Mk 1:13 reveals that in all His trials, He enjoyed the service of the Angels, the assurance of the protection of God. In other terms, the bringing together of the death of Jesus, in His New exodus, His new march across the desert, by the coupling of the Baptism of Jesus and His Desert Sojourn, opens up even more the trial of the Passage through the Sea. All these trials are intensely expressed in His Great Cry from the Cross – but, at the same time, the Canticle of Hope for the Poor but Just Man [Ps 22] places on the horizon the loving paternity revealed in the First Exodus and protection by the Fire in the Night and the Cloud by day, seen in Ws 17 as Divine Wisdom. This protection is expressed in poignant terms at the Baptism and again at the Transfiguration, on the threshold of the journey to Calvary. In this, the Angels will come to offer their assistance.

The putting together of the Baptism scene – without forgetting the Desert Trial which follows – and Jesus' Crucifixion, the following results:

- on the one hand, there is the sudden irruption onto the center stage what is referred to as 'the world of God', symbolized by the tearing asunder of the heavens – by the descent of the **Holy Spirit of God onto Jesus in the desert**;

- then, on the other hand, there is the explosion into the scene of what might be called the world of God into the Jewish world, symbolized by the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil, with its starry artistry, and by means of this echo of the voice coming down from heaven [1:11] expressed on the lips of the Roman Centurion.

This is the symbolic language of God – certainly, the non-believing Roman [much like so many proclamations of redemption on the lips of non-believers – as in the story of Judith, Holofernes' captain proclaiming the God of Israel; the non-Israelite 'Servant of God', Cyrus, the Persian who saves Israel] - was moved by the Holy Spirit of God. The Gospel dynamic follows a trajectory of the Holy Spirit of God: the Baptism scene, with its presence of the Dove who comes down from heaven onto Jesus – then in pushing Jesus out into the desert. The dynamic of the scene of Golgotha also shows the presence of the Holy Spirit by the association of the death of Jesus, from the Great Cry He expressed, His death as an **ex-spiration** – and finally, the result of it all: the Centurion's proclamation of the Divinity of Jesus Christ – a distant echo from the Voice from the Heavens at the Baptism and Transfiguration.

e. **The tearing of the Garments of Caiphas [Mk 14:63]**
 ... The high priest tore his robes ...!

While Jesus' trial was unfolding, following the Gospel account, in the presence of Jesus Caiphas tears his vestments in order to show his utter protest at what he considers, contrives to give the impression that he has just heard blasphemy on the part of Jesus responding to his questions. In order to present in a graphic manner this rending of his priestly robes, a different verb is used than the one employed for the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil. It can be concluded, then, that on the level of vocabulary, the Gospel of Mk does not seem to be inviting the reader to bring together these two actions of tearing asunder the fabrics. Furthermore, in the light of that which has already been noted in Mk concerning the attitude of Jesus with regard to the Temple, it has not seemed plausible to every interpreter that Mk is directing thought toward the Temple Veil as some kind of mantle of God, in order to declare that this rending was used to imply his disavowal of that which was developing on Golgotha.

The fact that Mk's Crucifixion scene suggests the idea of a disavowal on the part of God concerning the death of Jesus, as the three hours of Darkness interpreted in the spirit of the 9th Plague of Exodus, the awesome darkness, might also imply this for some interpreters. The fact of the tearing asunder of the temple Veil serves as a vehicle suggesting **the end of the temple service and of the entire system of life** that it represents, flowing from the attitude of Jesus in the light of the manner in which the Temple faith was being lived in the Judaism of His time and the bond which the Gospel emphasizes between Jesus and the Baptist milieu – all of these insights prepare the reader well to recognize all this. However, there is still the dominating interpretation that the bond between the death of Jesus as **the End of the life around the Temple** is even more profound, much more bound to the Mission

of Jesus than the explanation of the end of the Temple as a disavowal of the death of Jesus is not suggested here.

However, admitting this, it is only honest to note that it is necessary also to hold to the other reading of the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil, being presented as a miraculous event by which **God does express His disapproval for what is taking place on Golgotha**. It needs to be admitted that this interpretation appeared rather early in the apocryphal literature and was retained by St. Cyril of Alexandria. This led in some interpreters to **the connected view** that would note in the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil the declared announcement that God **would punish the Crucifixion of Jesus by the ruin of Jerusalem** in the year 70.

3. Further Clarification brought forward by other NT Writings: the contemplation so far has concentrated on that data and some of its parallels, that Mk offered regarding the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil that Mk has presented. The ultimate purpose of these reflections is to try to offer some further insight into the Great Cry that Jesus uttered from the Cross. In one further aspect of this reflection, there is presented here a rather rapid reflection on other NT texts that might be particularly susceptible in offering the believer the possibility of a deeper penetration into the Marcan perspectives and thus would most likely contribute to a more profound grasp of Jesus' Prayer from the Cross. The theme of the Rent Veil of the Temple has been presented by all three Synoptics as well as by the Document to the Hebrews, making use of it in a symbolic manner. Here the approach will be to take a look at the texts in Mt and Lk, and then briefly also to reflect on Hebrews – all of which might serve to clarify even further what has been revealed to the Church through Mark. It will be discerned that **the Piercing of the Side of Jesus** has also afforded mystics and theologians with much reflection.

a. The Torn Temple Veil in Mt [27:51]:

... at that, the Veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked, the rocks were split; the tombs opened, and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead ...

As might be noted immediately, the unfolding of the elements in Mt's rendition corresponds to what has already been observed in Mk's. However, it is precisely in the prolongation of the presentation of the Torn Temple Veil that Mt's account introduces a development which is proper to him, and which projects on the sign of the torn Temple Veil its own particular coloring. In Mt, just as soon as Jesus has given up His Spirit, not only is the Veil of the temple rent, from top to bottom, but the entire earth trembles, rocks are also torn asunder [the same verb as used for the tearing of the cloth fabric] – then the tombs open, and many holy persons came forth from their graves – they entered the Holy City and were seen by many.

Thus incorporated into a complexity of 'signs' which bring to mind the overturning of the world as it had been known up to that time and this associated with the resurrection of the dead, at least for a segment of the population, as the end of this world – the theme of the Temple Veil torn asunder might be connected with Mt 24:2, and is its fulfillment: **... I tell you solemnly, not a single stone here will be**

left on another; everything will be destroyed ...! And, in the following verse here, the disciples wanted to know when all this would take place. It seems to be connected with the ***Parousia*** of Jesus, His Second Coming at the end of time. Therefore, it might be concluded that for Mt, the **tearing asunder of the Temple Veil** serves in his presentation that the **death of Jesus is tied in with the end of the world**, this is the **inauguration of the Final Times**.

b. Lk's Account of the tearing of the Temple Veil [23:45]:

... The Veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, He said: 'Father, into Your Hands I commend My Spirit!' [Ps 31:5; Ac 7:60]. With these words, He breathed His last...!

In Lk, the sign of the Torn Veil follows immediately upon the mention of the time of darkness which this Gospel is the only one to explain as an **eclipse** of the son. The Lucan formulation of the element of darkness brings us back to Am 8:9. Furthermore, the 5th vision of Amos [9:1-4] speaks of the destroyed temple – and many interpreters find the connection here:

... I saw the Lord standing at the side of the altar. 'Strike the capitals', He said, 'and let the roof tumble down...!'

Immediately connected with the theme of darkness [Lk 23:44], the sign of the Torn Temple Veil in Lk is found as preparing, with this first theme, the announcement of the death of Jesus. Without entering into the detail of the structure of Lk's Crucifixion account [23:26-49], it is clear at what point this episode is dramatized further with the words of Jesus: His speaking to the women along the way to Calvary [vv. 28-31]; then Jesus' great prayer [which Stephen will repeat at his death in Ac] to His Father for His executioners [v. 34]; His words of promise to one of His companions in the execution [v.43] – all of these together constitute the summit of the scene of those mocking Him, His Prayer of Holy Abandonment to His Father, His Great Cry of Confidence to the Father – in this account, this comes immediately after the mention of the tie between the two signs already discussed, that of the Darkness and that of the rending of the Temple Veil.

Thus, situated between the two extremely benevolent sayings of Jesus: the promise made to the repentant thief, His own commitment into the Hands of the Father – the signs of the darkness and the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil serve to build up the drama perhaps even further than in Mk or Mt. These signs seem to bring out the more here the sense of a reproach on the part of God for that which is taking place on Calvary. This insight might the better reveal through the reaction of those witnessing these events, and the striking of their breasts in a sign of repentance, and the Centurion's reaction.

4. THE TEMPLE VEIL IN HEBREWS¹⁰³

[1] ... so that we, now that we have found safety, should have a strong encouragement to take a firm grip on the hope that is held out to us. Here we have an anchor for our soul, as sure as it is firm, and reaching right through beyond the veil, where Jesus entered before us and on our behalf, to become a high priest of the order of Melchisedek, and forever...! [cf. Heb 6:19-20].

[2] ... there was a Tent, which comprised two compartments: the first in which the lamp stand, the table and the Presentation Loaves were kept, was called the Holy Place; then, beyond the second veil, an innermost part which was called the Holy of Holies, to which belonged the altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant, all plated over with Gold ... [cf. Heb 9:2, ff.].

[3] ... In other words, brothers, through the blood of Jesus we have a right to enter the sanctuary, by a new way which He has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, that is to say, His Body... [cf. Heb 10:20]



PSYCHOLOGY/ THEOLOGY in the PASSION/ DEATH of the GREAT HIGH PRIEST

There are three episodes from the Earthly sojourn of Jesus, to which the Document to the Hebrews makes allusion and all three are relative to His Passion, and these merit to be analyzed more profoundly. These three lead us to cast a glance seeking some light on the dependence of the unknown author of Hebrews, and perhaps in the process receiving some insight into just who he might have been. These three happenings have a clear connection with the Synoptic tradition; and then with the Johannine catechesis, and they are:

- the Prayer of Gethsemane of Jesus;
- the purification of the Temple;
- the tearing of the Temple Veil.



A. Jesus Christ's Prayer in Gethsemane:

1. Among the NT writings, it is only this Document to the Hebrews and the Synoptics which make allusion to these Temptations. The majority of the Commentators identify justly the periasmoi of Heb 2L18; 4:15 - not so much to the satanic solicitations in the desert [as in Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13], but to all the dolorous trials that the Son of God endured during His earthly sojourn and in particular, the Agony of the Garden of Gethsemane [cf. Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46]. Heb 5:7 seems to refer to this extraordinary Agony in the Garden. The particularities of this verse do not permit the interpreter to see there a direct

¹⁰³ C. Spicq, OP, *L'Épître aux Hébreux, I. Introduction*. Paris: Gabalda 1952, pp. 99-109; 300; *II. Commentaire*. Paris: Gabalda 1953, pp. 166, f.; 249-250; 254; 315, f.;

dependence with the Synoptic accounts - but there cannot be doubted that there is some connection here.

a. It is particularly with the account from Lk that Heb has the most affinity. It is indeed this Evangelist who emphasizes the more the humanity and the distress of Jesus Christ during this trial and more particularly the extraordinary psychic effects of this moral agony. The intention of Heb is precisely to bring forward the Fear of the Savior before His death. The intense faith, the courage and the pitiable character of Jesus have profoundly moved exegetes, mystics as well as us simple students for generations! This shows the enormous capacity of **compassion** that Jesus could reach in redeeming the terrible anguish of His brothers and sisters, seized as all are before the aspect of unavoidable evil, particularly that involving death [cf. Heb 2:15].

b. Furthermore, the lesson that Lk draws from this scene is that of **Prayer in Temptation**. If this summarizes Mt's account, it accentuates the more the intensity of Christ's imploration. Now Heb emphasizes in similar manner the insistent supplication of Jesus expressing Himself with cries and tears. Mk, for his part, the first word of Jesus Christ is to ask whether this Chalice might be spared Him. According to Mk, the Lord immediately submits Himself to His Father's Will: ***If You wish...*** and he adds then: ***But, not according to My will, but Yours may be done!*** In proclaiming His dependence, His obedience, His Holy Abandonment with regard to the Father, Jesus expresses the very depths of His own soul, i.e., His religious Fear, adoration of God. His basic 'religious' spirit is that which Hebrews emphasizes here that ***He has set free all those who had been in slavery all their lives by the [servile, human??] fear of death*** [cf. Heb 2:15].

2. Heb therefore interprets quite exactly the theological point of view the outstanding principles of Jesus such as the 3rd Gospel had suggested them, and in making use of a term borrowed from Lk's dictionary. This word is found in the NT mostly in Heb: ***He submitted so humbly that His prayer was heard*** [5:7] - ***we have been given possession of an unshakable kingdom ... so let us worship God in a way that He finds acceptable...*** [Heb 12:28] . another form of this same verb is used by Lk: ***...prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple...*** [cf. 2:25] - ***... there were devout men...*** [cf. Ac 2:5] - ***there were some devout people*** [cf. Ac 8: 2] - ***Anannias was a devout follower of the Law*** [cf. Ac 22:42].

a. Neither Mt nor Mk would have it understood how the prayer of Jesus agonizing was heard, and this is brought out clearly by Heb 5:7 ***... During His life on earth, He offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the One Who had the power to save Him out of death, and He submitted so humbly that His prayer was heard ...*** - On the contrary, Lk 22:43 relates the appearance of an angel coming down from heaven. Coming to assist Jesus to continue victoriously the struggle. The angel, like a boxer's handler, consoles, encourages, fortifies His battered humanity - the angelic service seems to have been to help, or to render the strength of the Spirit to both His body and spirit. [cf. Ac 9:19: ***... after taking some food, he regained his strength...*** [cf. Ac 9:19]. The insistent prayer of the Savior was therefore fully heard by the Father.

b. The Document to the Hebrews envisages the **Agony of Jesus** from the perspective of the **psychological** point of view: this distress is the most decisive trial for the **authentic** humanity of the Savior's **weakness** – and, on the other hand, from the **theological** point of view. This trial is that of a **perfect**, great High Priest. The Priesthood of Jesus is rendered 'perfect' by His Passion and death [cf. Heb 5:8-9; Lk 13:32]. It is in acquiring a truly sensible compassion for all His mortal brothers and sisters, this is what constitutes one of the elements of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. This two-fold argument requires the rigorous reality of the facts. Thus **Heb** insists exceptionally on these and even adds a few notable details to the Gospel tradition, like Jesus' cries and tears:

[1] As Jesus prays at a high voice, in conformity with the Jewish custom, and that which had been heard by the three accompanying Apostles, serving as the Witnesses of His Agony, it was worthy of **Heb** to clarify that manner of anguished prayer by which the Savior expressed Himself by loud cries heard from afar, in the silence of the dark night.

[2] It is clearly the concern of **Heb** to interpret the historical facts of the NT in their function of having been prefigured in the OT, it is not impossible that the cries that Jesus the High Priest had received these from those mentioned in Ps 23:3, 6: ... ***Even if I were to walk in a ravine as dark as death, I should fear no danger for you are at my side. Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me...I will make my home in the house of the Lord for all time to come...*** This is clearly a messianic psalm, and its overall direction seems to point toward the Passion of the Lord.

[3] The simultaneous mention of the cries and the tears can be a personal interpretation of **Heb** and a perfect expression of the anguish of Jesus Christ. It would be next to impossible to present this scene without tears. The tears of the High Priest standing before the altar are also noted by 1 M 7:36, accompanying his prayer of Petition. These texts reveal the most moving of subjects, the distress of the Son of God with the utmost simplicity.

Heb presents this mystery simply: ... ***During His life on earth, He offered up prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and tears to the One Who had the power to save Him...*** [cf. Heb 5:7]. He speaks in similar terms regarding Jacob's prayer: ***Jacob wrestled with the Angel and beat him, he wept and pleaded with him. He met him at Bethel and there God spoke to us...*** [cf. Ho 12:5]. St. Thomas notes that 'through tears the Apostle expresses the interior groaning of the One praying. This is not read in the Gospel – but it is probable, because Jesus broke into tears at the resurrection scene [cf. Jn 11:35] of Lazarus, and so He did in His own passion. 'For Jesus did much that was not written down' This evocation of Jn's text suggests a clear connection.

[4] **Heb** does not intend to limit its allusion to just the happenings in Gethsemane. The Document rather sees Jesus' entire earthly sojourn as one of

abasement, trials and of dolors, sustained generously by the Word Incarnate, ***the days of His flesh*** [cf. Heb 5:7; Lk 1:23; 9:51; Ac 5:37; 21:26]:

... now it happened that as the time drew near for him to be taken up, He resolutely turned His face towards Jerusalem ... [9:51].

Jesus did indeed shed tears over Jerusalem – and at the death of His friend, Lazarus [cf. Lk 19:41; Jn 11:35]. He is in great Agony from the scene in Gethsemane all the way to His awful death. Therefore, the student would have every right to identify the crying of Heb 5:7 with those which Christ shed in several recorded episodes on the Cross [Mt 28:46, 50; Mk 15:34].

[5] Finally, this Heb 5:7 derives from a tradition, either written or oral, that had kept alive the recollection of this intense prayer expressing itself as a pained crying out as St. John Chrysostom held. A confirmation of this kind deriving from an original source is all the more plausible than perhaps even the Synoptic accounts which are not exactly parallel. It is noted that Lk 23:43-44 also contains some exceptional teachings ignored by Mt and Mk:

... Jesus cried out: Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing...!

c. This hypothesis becomes a certitude when it is admitted that the 4th gospel notes an agony of spirit of which **Christ is the Victim**:

... Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But, this is the very reason that I have come for this hour. Father, glorify Your Name. A Voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it ...!' ... The light will be with you only a little longer now. Go on your way, while you have the light, or darkness will overtake you, and nobody who walks in the dark knows where he is going. Walk while you still have the light, believe in the Light, so that you may become children of the light... [Jn 12:23-32].

This passage simple transcribes a theological interpretation of the Gethsemane episode, analogous to that of **Heb**. The cry of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus is more the agony of one's soul over being the command of 'one in charge' – even though He was! When the Greeks asked Philip to bring them to his Master, it became clear that the pagans were awaiting and asking for salvation, and it is seen in this unfolding of a providential announcement that the hour of the Passion was ringing. Now was the time for Him to die [cf. Jn 12:23].

d. There is indicated here a state of profound trouble in which the psyche of Jesus was deeply plunged. It is the horror that His human nature experienced in the face of the perspective of His impending imminent torture and death. The evangelist emphasize, as in **Heb**, the terrible trial suffered by the Savior, tempted as anyone among His brothers and sisters prior to death. These dramatic sentiments are presented as a kind of prototype to which the conduct and the sentiments of the disciples ought to conform themselves [cf. Jn 13:24-26; 13:15: ***...Anyone who loves his life, loses it... I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you...***

3. All of this is handed on is presented with a view to **instructing** His disciples and comforting them that Jesus is to be imitated, followed:

... It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours... [cf. Jn 12:30]

... Do not let yourselves be troubled. You trust in God, trust in Me also... [cf. Jn 14:1-27].

a. This whole process of communicating His anguish to His followers expresses His **obedience** and His **devotion** towards God. He knows first-hand the omnipotence of His Father Who would be able to rescue Him from this torment, while Jesus wishes most of all to glorify His Father:... ***what should I say? Father, save Me...?*** But this is the very reason why He came ***Father glorify Your Name!*** The connection with **Heb** is manifest - both Jn and **Heb** place their emphasis on Jesus' **religious dependence** on the Father's will. They both insinuate that the Death of Jesus is efficacious for the salvation of the world, and if this glorifies God that is less due to its character as a **bloody immolation**, as it is the **expression of an absolute obedience: it is obedience, mercy I want, not sacrifice!** This is because He is **religiously abandoned** that the Savior is a **perfect Victim**, agreeable to the Father [cf. Jn 12:103; Ph 2:8].

b Furthermore, Jn declares clearly that Jesus' prayer was heard in the Garden. The Father responds to the sentiments and to the appeal of His Most Beloved Son, by a sensible manifestation of approval: ***There came then a voice from heaven: I have glorified it, and I will again glorify it!*** [cf. Jn 11:28]. This marks the result of the fervent prayer of Jesus: **the Heavenly voice** corresponds to **the intervention of the angel** in Lk 23:30 - ***The crowd, standing by said it was a clap of thunder; others said: it was an angel speaking to Him...*** [v. 29].

c. The most astonishing affinity between Jn and **Heb** is perhaps the absence in them of every concrete, historical and chronological detail relative to the **Garden of Olives** in so far as this episode had on the sentiments of Jesus and His **intimate relationships** He had with His Father. No less remarkable is their common conception that the Passion is the glorification of Jesus:

... what we do see Jesus, Who was for a short while made less than the angels now crowned with glory and honor because He submitted to death, so that by God's grace His experience of death should benefit all humanity ... [Heb 2:9].

d. Even more to the point is Heb 5:7: ***...During His life on earth, He offered up prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and tears ...*** - which evokes the Gethsemane scene, with regard to the glory of the Great High Priest. According to the 4th Gospel, the Passion of Jesus Christ is the unfolding of His **glorification** [cf. Jn 7:39; 12:16; 13:31; 17:1, 5]. The conversion of non-believers is a prime consequence of the redemptive sacrifice, will be the glory of Jesus Christ, i.e., the **beginning of his universal royalty: ...now the Prince of this World has been cast out!** [cf. Heb 2:14] - ***... when I am raised up from the earth, I will draw all to Myself*** [cf. Jn 12:31, f.],

e. The Reign of Satan is abolished by the raising of the Cross, while the reign of Christ will be extended. His **Lordship** and consequently, His **Glory**, as that of His Heavenly Father, results from His enduring the Passion, from the conversion of the gentiles and their homage. **Heb** insists both on the glorious fecundity of Jesus' sacrifice, as well as on the **personal Glory** that He draws from this. The **glory of the faithful**, as well as the **Glory of Jesus Christ** in the Father's Plan, were eternally linked in His Death on the Cross.

f. On the one hand, these texts might be quoted:

... we do see Jesus , Who was for a short while made less even than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because He submitted to death; so that by God's grace His experience of death should benefit all humanity... [Heb 2:9].

... He learned obedience, Son though He was, through His sufferings; when He had been perfected, He became for all who obey Him the source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed God with the title of High Priest of the order of Melchisedek... [cf. Heb 5:9, f.].

4. On the other hand, the theme of Jn 12:23-32 [*... What I shall I say: Save Me from this Hour? ... it was for this very reason that I came. Father, glorify Your Name... !*] - the real triumph of Jesus - will be the fruit of His sacrificial death and it is this which dominates the entire Christology of Hebrews:

... He is the reflection of God's glory and bears the impress [karakter] of God's own being, sustaining all things by His powerful command... now that He has purged sins away, He has taken His seat at the right hand of the divine Majesty... [cf. Heb 1:3, f.].

...He has passed through the greater, more perfect Tent, not made by human hands ... He has entered the sanctuary once and for all ... taking with Him ... His own blood, having won an eternal redemption ... How much more will the blood of Christ, Who offered Himself, blameless though He was to God through the eternal Spirit, purify our consciences from dead actions ... so that we can worship the living God... [cf. Heb 9:12-14].

...It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary, which was merely a model of the real one; He has entered heaven itself, so that now He appears in the presence of God on our behalf. And He does not have to offer Himself again and again as the high priest goes into the sanctuary year after year ...He has made His appearance once and for all, at the end of the final age, to do away with sin by sacrificing Himself... [vv. 24-28].

... He, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and has taken His seat forever, at the right hand of God , where He is now waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. By virtue of that one single offering, He has achieved the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified... [cf. Heb 10:12].

... Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus , Who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection, for the sake of the joy which lay ahead of Him, He endured the Cross,

disregarding the shame of it, and has taken His seat at the right hand of God's throne. Think of the way He persevered against such opposition from sinners, and then you will never lose heart and come to grief. In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting. To the point of blood shed...[cf. Heb 12:2, ff.].

[Epilogue] ... *I pray that the God of Peace, Who brought back from the dead Our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, b the blood sealed n an eternal Covenant, may prepare o to do His Will in every kind of good action; effecting in us all whatever is acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen!* ... [Heb 13:20, f.].

a. Similarly, just as Jesus Himself **obeys** His Father, in accepting His mandate to die, it is from the Father that He receives His only infinite glory [cf. Jn 8:54]. The Father is at the Font of the Plan of salvation, as He is of the **glorification** of His Son [cf. Jn 12:28; 13:32].

b. These thoughts are taken up in a new way and applied to the Great High Priest by **Heb** :

... He submitted to death so that by God's grace His experience of death should benefit all humanity. It was fitting for God, for whom and through Whom everything exists, should, in bringing many sons to glory, make perfect through suffering the Leader of their salvation. For Consecrator and Consecrated are of the same stock... [cf. Heb 2:9-10].

... Here I am! I am coming to do your will! [cf. Ps 40, the Disciple's Prayer]. He is abolishing the first sort to establish the second And this Will was for us to be made holy by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ made once and for all... [Heb 10:9-10].

Summary:

It surely could not be denied that there is truly a very close relationship between **Heb 5:7** & **Jn 12:23-32**. Both texts develop in a similar manner the historical fact of **Gethsemane**. Their psychological and theological interpretation of Jesus' deepest human sentiments, the theme of spirituality in the perspective they employ in judging the events: **are analogous if not identical**. Since the Beloved Disciple was the eye-witness of Gethsemane and of which he only transcribed his personal reminiscences, most interpreters do not believe that the 4th Evangelist was inspired by any extraneous source for this unique event. There is every evidence that the unknown author of **Heb** knew the tradition received by Lk, but more as a doctrinal elaboration. This aspect seems to be the perception received after **contemplating the sacred Tradition** of the 4th Gospel. In the last analysis, it seems that **Heb** depended on Jn. This unknown author was instructed by the Johannine Catechesis.

B. THE PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE

1. If the central idea of the **Christology in Hebrews** is original, it is this: **Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, has penetrated the Celestial Sanctuary, where He unique facilitates access to all those who are attached to Him and who follow Him by obeying His word in this life** [cf. Heb 10:19-22]:

... We have, then, brothers, complete confidence through the Blood of Jesus in entering the sanctuary, by a new way which He has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, i.e., His flesh. And we have the High Priest over all the Sanctuary of God. So, as we go in, let us be sincere in heart and filled with faith, our hearts sprinkled and free from an trace of bad conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us keep firm in the faith we profess, because the One who made the promise is faithful. Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Do not absent yourself from your own assemblies, as some do, but encourage each other; the more so as you see the Day drawing near... [Heb 10:19-23].

2. Indeed, all the Proclamations of the Birth and the Infancy of Jesus in Lk 1-2, gravitate around the Temple atmosphere, in a truly **prayer-filled, Hymn-filled setting: Benedictus; Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis**. It is in this sanctuary and in the celebration of this Liturgy that the Precursor is announced [cf. Lk 1:5-10]. It is in these context that the Divine Descendant of David is **presented** to the Lord in His House [Lk 2:22], received there by Simeon and Anna [2:27, 37]. It is to this same Temple that Jesus journeys in Pilgrimage with His parents in the last of His pre-teen years. When He is questioned why He was 'Isot' for three days in the Temple, His answer was that He had to be about **His Father's business**.

a. Prior to accomplishing the decisive action of His Vocation, which is the redemption of the human race,, Jesus **makes His Messianic and Priestly entrance into the Temple**. [cf. Lk 19:29-46]. This fulfills the ancient history typified in Solomon's [The Prince of peace] Consecration:

... ***Zadok, the priest, the Prophet Nathan, Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, and the Cherithites and Pelethites then went down: they mounted Solomon on King david's mule and escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the Tent and anointed Solomon. They sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted Long Live King Solomon! The people escorted him back, with pipes playing and loud rejoicing and shouts split the earth...*** [1 K 1:38-40]. [cf. also Zc 9:9, .ff.]

b. The Prophet Nathan had come to enthrone Solomon, at the Fountain of Gihon, at the foot of Mount Olives, and had poured out on his head the sacred oil brought into the sanctuary. The new king mounts the donkey of his father, and then entered into Jerusalem to the blaring sound of trumpets and accompanied by powerfully resounding triumphant chants.

3. The **cortege of Jesus** is much more modest [cf. Mk 11:1-11; Mt 21:1, ff; Jn12:12-16] – His procession is not a military parade, but a **liturgical priestly procession of the Great High Priest to the Altar of Sacrifice, into Jerusalem**,

and then beyond to Calvary. This manifestation which the hostility of the Pharisees is powerless to prohibit, makes up part of a **sacred ritual**, established by the eternal will of the Heavenly Father. This is the **solemn Entrance into the Sanctuary** prior to His bloody sacrifice. During this last week of His life, Jesus does not withdraw from the **sacred precincts** – He is already established as the Supreme **High Priest**, and He speaks there as a **Prophet**, and acts there as a **Royal judge**. The ‘theocratic’ authorities, totally over-whelmed by His audacity, seem to have abdicated into His hands [cf. Lk 19:47-21:37]. Following His departure into heaven, the Messianic Community shows itself to be assiduous in the Temple and its offices.: **they were constantly in the Temple praising God** [cf. Lk 24:53; Ac 1:14; 2:1, 46; 5:52].

4. One of the Most significant actions of Jesus during His mortal life is His **Purification of the Temple** -- this House of Prayer, and Dwelling of His Father. He justifies this, citing the OT Prophets:

... all who observe the Sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to My Covenant: these I shall lead to my Holy Mountain, and make them joyful in My House of Prayer... [Is 56:7].

...Do you look on this Temple that bears My Name as a den of bandits...? [Jr 7:11].

The Synoptics place this event on Monday of Holy Week [cf. Mt 21:12, f.; Mk 11:15-17; Lk 19:45-46] as they place Jesus’ coming into Jerusalem for the final Pasch. In reality, it is pointed out, it is by this Messianic and High Priestly solemn manifestation that the Christ had the intention of beginning His ministry, as St. Jn makes clear in his gospel [cf. Jn 2:4,11]: **...My Hour has not yet come ... this was the first of Jesus’ signs: it was at Cana of Galilee. He revealed His glory...**

a. In place of designating the Temple as the **House of God**, in conformity with the OT custom, and also because He makes it truly so, also by making the New Temple His very incarnate Person [cf. Mt 12:4; Mk 2:26; Lk 6:5]. Jesus eventually presents Himself as ‘the son of God’ in the Messianic sense.

b. The Sanhedrin, who had been informed about the Precursor’s witness [cf. Jn 1:19-28; cf. Mt 3:1: **... Look, I shall send My messenger to clear a way before Me. And suddenly the Lord Whom you seek, will come to His Temple; yes, the Angel of the Covenant for Whom you long...**] were totally incapable of ever even imagining the possible authentic identity of this **New Prophet**. When He entered into the Temple, He takes possession of an inheritance which is truly His.

c. The initiative of purifying it is normal, on the part of the One Who presents Himself as the Messiah. Far from presenting Himself as a usurper, or as an ambitious pretender, Jesus accomplishes His Mission on His own, and acts in full authority. He comes across as the **Master of the Father’s House** [cf. Heb 3:6].

d. Now, **Heb** conceives in a similar manner Jesus’ entrance into the **Celestial Sanctuary**. Jesus has access into this unique **Holy of Holies** as Son. By full right, He alone has full access there – He is the only One with the power to

penetrate into the presence of God. He substitutes His own Incarnate Person in substituting for the traditional guardians of the earthly Temple, the powerless ministers of the ancient Jerusalem Liturgy. The Document to the **Hebrews** has the same apologetical and polemical concerns as the Evangelists do, and as St. Jn does in notable manner.

e. Jesus is subjected to the questioning of the Sanhedrin asking Him to justify His own conduct in the Temple: ... ***What sign can you show us that you should act like this ...*** {Jn 2:18}. **Heb** responds by the power granted to Him by God Himself and by His oath as Son Whom the Father has instituted as the Great High Priest, with full right and all power. The historical manifestation of Jesus as the Royal Priest in the Temple – takes place both at the beginning of His ministry of salvation – as well as in His triumphant entrance into the Holy City, Jerusalem. This can be considered as the Type of His entrance in to the **Celestial Sanctuary** into the very presence of God, on the day of His resurrection.

5. In this context, Jesus immediately – in response to the Sanhedrin - immediately has recourse to His Death and Resurrection:

... Jesus answered: 'Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied: 'It has taken 46 years to build this Temple and are You going to raise it up again in three days?' But, He was speaking of the Temple that was His body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this; and they believed the Scripture and what he had said... [cf. Jn 2:19-22].

a. His Paschal mystery is His immediate allusion in this context - this will be at the same time the decisive sign of His Messianic Character and the condition and the beginning of the New Spiritual Liturgy He establishes. It might be observed that among the complaints that will be retained against Jesus Christ in the tribunal before Caiphas His clearer claiming anew of His unique Divine Filiation is associated with that of the **reconstruction of the Temple** [cf. Mt 21:61-63]. It will be noted in Mk [14:58], the two epithets: **made by the hand of man - not made by the hand of man**. This is taken up in Heb 9:11, 24 and in an analogous context that of the **purification of the sanctuary**, there is provided a technical attribute of the Temple of Jerusalem in the NT [cf. Ac 7:13-14, 48]. It is according to the Christian tradition that it is necessary to attribute this interpretation of a **Spiritual Temple identified with Jesus Himself**. [cf. Jn 2:19; Mt 12:7].

b. Here again it is Jn who has inspired more directly the theological reflection of **Heb**. Since the 4th Gospel places on the lips of Jesus this statement: ***Destroy this Temple*** - He had in mind that sanctuary constructed of stone and mortar, where the Levitical ceremonies continued. This would serve up until: ***I will raise it up in three days!*** Here, it is the Body of Christ that is intended, of course, the Christ in Glory by the resurrection: He was speaking of the Temple of His own Body [cf. Jn 2: 21; 10:17; Heb 10:20] - ***I offer My life in order to take it up again...!***

c. And there is indicated here that the New Economy of Salvation will taken over exercising the same role as the former earthly temple, which served as the center of the Mosaic religion. **Throughout the Gospel of St. John, Jesus compares Himself to the Temple in a veiled manner and commits to His own Person the entire Liturgy and all exercise of religion.** Jesus Himself takes the place of Jacob's Ladder [cf. Jn 1:51] - ***From His Side will flow the streams of living water*** - as the Messianic Temple will provide the source of the streams of salvation [cf. Jn 7:38; cf. Ezk 47:1-12; Jl 4:18; Zc 13:1; 14:8]. This theme is systematically developed by **Heb** under other metaphors.

d. The entire Liturgy is organized by being celebrated in a Sanctuary. In removing the animals from the Temple and in purifying it, Our Lord is insinuating a new form of Liturgy, one that is different from the old - where the victims will no longer be animals without reason, and this is the consequence of the fact that the New Sanctuary will no longer be material. This purification is therefore equivalent to the announcement of a suppression. It will be Jesus Christ Himself Who will be offered as the Sacrificial Victim, and Who, in His Resurrection, will inaugurate the New Liturgy.

e. The entire Christian Liturgy will from now on be summarized in Him. So, too, in the Heavenly City described by the Apocalypse the Lamb is expressly designated as the Temple [Rv 21:22], i.e., the place of reunion and the intimacy of God with persevering believers: ***That they may be one, as we are One, Me in them, and you in Me*** [cf. Jn 17:22-23]. According to **Heb**, all the Liturgical institutions of Israel are hereby abolished, the animal victims are suppressed. Now, there is only the one Celestial Liturgy, and one sole Celebrant, the eternal High Priest-King-Prophet by Whom all the believers are led into the presence of God.

6. It would seem that the immediate listeners would not have directly understood all the implications of what He was saying. They needed His prophecy to be interpreted in its fulfillment. The Apostles themselves would only have come to grasp the implication of all this later on: ***...and when Jesus had risen from the dead His disciples remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the words He had said...*** [cf. Jn 2:22].

a. The Holy Spirit would have to inspire into them the full intelligence of the Lord's Gospel of Truth [cf. Jn 14:26: ***... the Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of all I said to you...*** [cf. Jn 14:26] - this would be provided for them only after the Resurrection: ***... He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive; for there was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified ...*** [Jn 7:39].

b. Having received His light, the author of **Heb** speculates on the symbolism which St. Jn attaches to the event and became the best interpreter of his thought. Beyond all doubt, as for Gethsemane, he does not refer explicitly to the historical fact of the purification of the Jerusalem Temple, but his implicit allusion leaves little doubt. The text attaches to the incident an importance that is so considerable that for the 4th Evangelist, **the purification of the Temple by Jesus is**

the equivalent of a New Consecration: ... it was the time when the Feast of Dedication was being celebrated in Jerusalem. It was winter... [cf. Jn 10:22].

c. Jn has no fear in advancing this paradox: **the inauguration of the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in heaven as like the purification of the Temple: ... It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modeled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf** ... [cf. Heb 9:23]. From this fact on, the entire **New Liturgy** depends on this decisive act and serves as its deployment: so much so that the old sacrifices of animals are indispensable for the purification of the earthly temple, while it is necessary that it be the Blood of the Son of God.

d. His death, followed by His Resurrection, permits men to enter into the Temple of the heavens, the Celestial Sanctuary, now ready to receive all the Faithful who persevere unto death. One cannot note more happily the continuity of **Jesus Priestly Office on earth and in heaven** [cf. Heb 9:24] - nor harmonize more clearly the two Covenants. The **New Liturgical Economy** corresponds to the Old, and is inaugurated by an analogous ritual. More precisely, when Jesus purifies the Heavenly Sanctuary, the Christ renews the gesture that He had accomplished in Jerusalem at the begging of His terrestrial ministry and bestows on it, its ultimate meaning, its authentic efficacy.

e. From the moment that the Great High Priest disposes of His Blood poured out on the Cross, the ultimate efficacy of the Heavenly Purification occurs. As Jn 2:19 [..in three days I will raise it up...!] prophecies the resurrection, this efficacy places the purification of the Temple in relationship with the death of Jesus and insinuates that the humanity of the Risen Savior will indeed be the center of the **New Liturgy** - the Faithful will no longer adore the Father either on Mount Moriah, nor on Garizim [cf. Jn 4:21-24].

f. According to *Heb*, in purifying the Temple of Heaven the Christ opens too all the Faithful access to God through His pierced side. This accomplishes the **perfection** of His Priestly Office, by disposing of the most holy Victim that ever was, His flesh and His Blood. This is the conception of the **Christian and Celestial Liturgy** according to *Heb*, and is absolutely in conformity with that of the Apostle of **the religion in spirit and in truth** - there seems little doubt that Heb depends on Jn!



C. THE SECOND TEMPLE VEIL

... so that we, now that we have found safety, should have a strong encouragement to take a firm grip on the hope that is held out to us. Here we have an anchor for our soul, as sure as it is firm, and reaching right through beyond the veil, where Jesus entered before us and on our behalf, to become a high priest of the order of Melchisedek, and forever...! [cf. Heb 6:19-20].

[I] In General

1. **Heb** has borrowed from the Synoptic tradition [cf. Mt 26:51; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:19, f.] and has profoundly exploited the **Liturgical** conception of the death of Jesus Christ under its two - fold aspect: **the sacrificial outpouring of the Lord's Precious Blood** and **the Institution of the New Covenant** . However, it is in function of the Johannine catechesis which has interpreted spiritually and liturgically the tearing of the Veil of the Temple. This is the miracle reported without much comment by the three Synoptics [cf. Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45]. The incident was noted by the Gospel and it found its way into **Heb** . It is remarkable that this Document [cf. Heb 6:19; 9:3; 10:20] is the only other NT writing which makes any allusion at all to this. For some interpreters, the torn Temple Veil is the sign that the Levitical priestly service is at an end. **Heb** places this Veil miracle into a direct and intrinsic relationship with the **Death of Jesus Christ** - this is so evident that the faithful student cannot help but notice this implicit reference to the gospel tradition.

2. Here again it is not so much the historical fact which interests the unknown sacred author as much as its **symbolism** does. This does presuppose the real and well known event and serves as the basis for all contemplation on it. The **Torn Veil** becomes metaphor to express a **theological conception**.

a. A Veil is at one and the same time a **closing** and an **opening**. In the Temple of Jerusalem it served as the symbol of **inaccessibility** to the Lord God directly. It interdicted in an effectual manner the entrance into the Holy of Holies to all, to any other than to the Great High Priest and him, once a year only [cf. Heb 9:3, 6-10]. For **Heb** , it represented the obstacle which forbade sinners from acceding immediately into heaven.

b. By His **Sacrifice**, Jesus was able to penetrate into the authentic sanctuary, into the presence of God, and to be establish permanently His presence there to exercise **His Priestly Ministry in behalf of sinners**. It is necessary to comprehend that Jesus Christ has accomplished the ransom of humanity and re-established between the human race and God the relations of authentic intimacy which sin had disrupted and rendered impossible.

c. This truth **Heb** has expressed with the metaphor of the torn veil. To signify that all the Faithful Believers can from now on have access to heaven, and the Document declares that their hope penetrates beyond the veil [cf. Heb 6:19]. For the Faithful of the Church their hope is drawn upward - or better the **torn veil** becomes in the Christian Liturgy the symbol of **openness**, of an **entrance**, a

gateway, a nuptial exchange - and this is applied from this point onward to the very Person of Jesus Christ. By His death, He has raised the barrier - opened it wide: ... **this [divine] will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once for all by Jesus Christ ...** [Heb 10:9, f.].

d. **The Tearing of the Veil** signifies therefore on the one hand, that in Jesus Christ, the faithful enter into the possession of all the richness of the grace and of expiation as the old sanctuary was powerless to obtain all this for them [cf. Jn 1:16]. With the open side, God Himself becomes present and accessible. Then, on the other hand, the Temple of Jerusalem becomes merely a profane building, where the Lord God no longer takes up residence, it is no longer 'his' House of Prayer - thus, it was destined only for destruction [cf. Jn 2:20].

e. As the basis of this theological insight and its metaphorical expression, it is necessary to maintain that the *logion* of the Lord in action with the **Purification of the Temple**: the new will substitute for, take over for the Mosaic Cult - and even more, this becomes a sublime **theological principle**. It is noted in Jn 14:6: **...I am the Way, the Truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me...** From this moment on **Heb** presents Jesus under the aspect of the **Great High Priest**, carrying out His Liturgical service in the **Celestial Sanctuary** forever One can only rise up to participate fully in the exercise of His High Priestly Ministry unless, as a Faithful, Persevering Believer, one has persevered to the end, living the piercing sword, the Cross of His Word. One enters the **Holy of Holies in the Celestial Sanctuary** beyond the outer veil of this life. Thus, **Heb** reports the historical fact noted by the Synoptics, the **tearing of the Temple Veil** - the unknown author reads this in the light of the Johannine catechesis which is simply this: **Jesus Christ alone provides access to the Heavenly Father. By His death, he has opened the Gate of Heaven, opened the Way** [cf. Jn 10:1-18], by allowing the piercing of the Veil, blocking entrance to the Celestial sanctuary, the Holy of Holies.



[II] THE ANCHOR & the VEIL

... so that we, now that we have found safety, should have a strong encouragement to take a firm grip on the hope that is held out to us. Here we have an anchor for our soul, as sure as it is firm, and reaching right through beyond the veil, where Jesus entered before us and on our behalf, to become a high priest of the order of Melchisedek, and forever...! [cf. Heb 6:19-20].

1. The metaphor of the **Torn Veil** evolves and is clarified. Christians are no longer fugitive, persecuted, exiled from this world, but as sailors whose ship, out in the deep between heaven and the sea, during the 'perfect storm', and is threatened by perdition: **...Some people have put conscience aside and wrecked their faith in consequence** ... [cf. 1 Tm 1:19].

a. Their confidence of one day arriving at home port and their courage of battling on against hostile forces does not weaken them, for their **hope** is like an

Anchor **solidly fixed high into the invisible world of heaven**. This is an anchor of an entirely new nature: while sailors usually cast their anchor into the depths of the sea, the **anchor** of the Christians is thrust upward, through the clouds, into the very Heavenly sanctuary, according to Chrysostom.

b. This image of the **anchor** might be somewhat 'natural' under the pen of the unknown inspired author of **Heb** who might have personal familiarity with the great port of Alexandria, Egypt. However, it needs to be remembered that in the ancient OT context, it was piously believed in their cosmogony that there was an ocean above and an ocean below the universe, enabling the Lord God to open the 'sluice gates' to irrigate the dry land [cf. Gn 1:7; 7:11-12].

c. At any rate, there is no mention at all of the **anchor** in the OT and there is no real equivalent in the Hebrew language. It is mentioned several times in the description of Paul's Departure for Rome in Acts [cf. 27: 29, 39, 40]. In Greek literature, especially among the moralists the comparison of the **anchor** is quite frequent, notably to indicate the **stability of virtue**: it was pointed out that wealth is an anchor that is not very secure, and 'opinion' is even weaker - the only anchors that matter would be prudence, magnanimity, strength. We need to be careful not to be swept away by the floods of emptiness but need to cast anchor against them - and we need the assistance of a trustworthy guide to reach the portals of knowledge or find a guiding light - and this is often **Hope**.

d. It is more than tempting for the scholar to give to this text in Heb an eschatological flavor. There was a commonly held conviction in antiquity that the wayfarers had to cross the seas, the particular and dangerous domain of the gods in order to find the happy islands. One could only arrive at the peaceful harbor of heaven only after the terrible struggles of life against the tumultuous waves of sin and trials - the major struggles of antiquity were the hostile flames and the waves. In the one Catacomb of Priscilla there were found more than 70 representations associated with Christ where the deceased buried there had reached the safe port of Heaven. We need to struggle until death [Heb 12:3] - does the spirit of man go upward, and that of the beast goes down [cf. Qo 3:21] - faith looks forward [cf. 1 P 1:9]. **Hope** is the anchor for the Faithful Christian.

e. Some interpreters would understand the first two adjectives [**sure-firm**] as pertaining to the anchor - and the third [**reaching right through the veil**] pertaining to hope. However, it would be far more natural [with Chrysostom] to apply all three adjectives to **hope**. This would be an application of **authentic Wisdom**: ... **steadfast, dependable, unperturbed...** [etc. - Ws 7:23, ff.].

f. For others, the first adjective here - **sure** - expresses a negative sense - and the 2nd, - **firm** - is the positive rendition of this state of being fixed in the storm of trial and temptation. If the anchor thrown into the sea, does not bite into the ocean floor there is disaster - likewise, **the anchor for the soul** must be firmly, fixed above in an undetachable manner. This is the guarantee for the wanderer, seeking the Star of the Sea, to wait out the trouble to reach home port. This is what is emphasized in

the determination of **the Celestial Sanctuary as the place of attachment of the Anchor of Hope**. The **Anchor is thrust into the very heart of the Holy of Holies in heaven** - this is the residence of God, the Holy Place described [cf. Heb 9:3-7]: ... **the Holy Place, beyond the Second Veil the Holy of Holies - only entered once a year...** This was reserved for the grandiose celebration of the Holy Day of expiation [cf. Lv 16², 12 - followed by the Code of Holiness, Lv 17-26; Ex 36:33].

f. This is one of the strongest biblical texts describing the authentic nature of **theological hope** and its **immutability**. This is why such biblical Hope provides **a certitude of upward inclination** that is engendered as the mysterious **seduction** that hope exercises, even all the while the **invisibility** and the present **inaccessibility** of the theological virtue are retained. In this view, the Faithful are anchored in heaven, the Home Port of the Beatitudes! By hope, the Faithful are already in heaven. Success is certain for all the Faithful who hope: Hope in some way places one already in some possession. That which is more true is the more persuasive Heavenly hope in the long run is more convincing to the believer.

2. **Our Great High Priest has preceded us there! [Heb 6:20]**. The exhortation here [6:2-9] unfolds like a Homily on this text of Gn: ... ***because you have not refused Me your son [Isaac], I will shower blessings on you ...*** [cf. vv.16-17]. One comes to comprehend here the true heirs of the Promise. **Heb 6:20** provides the true nature of Christian Hope - that stretches all the way from Abraham to Jesus Christ. The **Anchor**, therefore, is Jesus Christ Himself - the Great High Priest, already beyond the Veil in the Celestial Sanctuary, in the eternal Holy of Holies.

a. St. Paul clearly designates **Christ Jesus, our hope** [cf. 1 Tm 1:1] - ... ***our salvation is not in sight, we should not have to be hoping for it if it were...*** [Rm 8:24]. In like manner, the ships are in security when their anchors have bitten into the rock below - in a similar manner, Christians are safe in the measure that they are attached to, connected to Jesus Christ. Then they are strong and are able to withstand the storms of evil.

b. The Christ of Heb, as the Christ of Rv, is leading us onward, upward: ... ***Christ in you is the hope of glory ...*** [cf. Col 1:27] - He is already in heaven, He has entered there on the day of the Ascension, and in a manner thus explained: ... ***He has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with Him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but His own Blood, having won an eternal redemption for us...*** [Heb12:9].

c. He has gone there precisely to live eternally in our regard His actual role of Savior: ... ***His power to save is utterly certain, since He is living forever to intercede for all who come to God through Him...*** [cf. Heb 7:25]. He has gone on ahead to prepare for us a place there [cf. Jn 14:2], and He provides for us **access to the Celestial Sanctuary through His Open Side**. Throughout, the emphasis is on **for us**:

... through the Blood of Jesus we have the right to enter the sanctuary by a new way He has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, i.e. His Body...Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the One who made the promise is faithful... [cf. Heb 10:19-23].

d. There is clear reference here to the Incarnation and the Cross - as the great High Priest of old, Jesus penetrates into the Celestial Sanctuary. In Lv, the High Priest enters all sole alone into the Holy of Holies in behalf of [for] Israel - to them, all access remained interdicted. But Jesus reaches there with the title of Precursor - and has left the door opened for our entry. **He Who runs on ahead of us** - is a blessed designation of Jesus Christ, the fondation of our hope. He precedes us and announces : ... **Father! I want those you have given Me to be with Me where I am, so that they may always see the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world!** [Jn 17:24].

e. Jesus is compared to the First-Fruit of all who have fallen asleep [cf. 1 Co 15:20]: He is like a long-distance runner - the **Athletic Champion** - Who has surpassed all the others in this race of life and has reached the Finish Line in the Celestial Sanctuary: ... ***Now I know that the Lord saves His Anointed, and answers Him from His Holy Heaven, and mighty victories from His own right hand...*** [cf. Ps 20:6].

f. Others see this as the **Victorious General** after a fierce combat - Jesus is like the **Military Advance Scout** Who has gone on ahead through great dangers to trace out the best route to get to the goal. Christ is really the 'Head', the **Experienced Leader**: ... ***As it was His purpose to bring a great many of His sons into glory, it was appropriate that God, for Whom everything exists and through Whom everything exists, should make perfect, through suffering, the LEADER, Who would take them to their salvation...*** [Heb 2:10].

g. The emphasis is always on Jesus' humanity - it is Man that He becomes the great High Priest - like His brothers and sisters in all things, save sin - thus He will be followed by them. The challenge of His Followers is not to let Him get too far ahead so that they would lose sight of Him -or that they make Peter's mistake, **He followed at a distance** [cf. Mk 14:54]. If this distance gets too great, Christ cannot be our Precursor - we need to follow His route, every day, the Way of the Cross. He sets the pace on the march and His followers are called to press closely after him, following in His foot-steps.

h. This Leader, on the open tumultuous seas is charged by His Heavenly Father, to find a sure and firm anchorage. He will be the first to go into the safe haven of the final Port of Destination. This metaphor with almost endless ramifications could well have been from the pen of Apollos, by many suspected to be the unknown author of this Document. He might have been familiar in Egypt with a structure known as **God's Highway**, a large almost manicured pathway - bordered by statues of sacred animals, leading right into the Temple, and on this well kept path way, the grandiose religious Processions unfolded. There was also much admiration for the skilled pilots in Alexandria Bay who could bring the ships to a safe docking despite the many obstacles.

i. Christ has passed through the Veil, He has broken open the ultimate obstacle that would separate the faithful from God. As the Great High Priest and exercising the highest and most complete service of the High Priest, he lives His Priesthood of the Order of Melchisedek. That which no Israelite before Him could ever hope to do was to penetrate as the Great High Priest into the Heavenly Holy of

Holies - Christians are now invited to do so, provided that they live their lives in the Liturgical Procession of Life all the way to the Celestial Sanctuary. Even though they are sinners, they will nonetheless be introduced into this Divine Sanctuary, thanks to the Personal Sacrifice of Jesus Christ in His human nature offered as Victim. His unique form of Love comes to us as His loving state of perpetual immolation, a being **FOR others**.

j. Jesus will exercise His High Priesthood **forever** - with **the same solidity of the Anchor** cast high into this Celestial Sanctuary. ... You are **a priest...and for ever**... The Lord has sworn an oath which He will never retract: you are **a priest and for ever**... this One, because He remains **for ever**, can **never lose His priesthood**... [cf. **Heb 7:17, 21, 24**]. Because of this, Christian Hope enjoys the maximum guarantee in Jesus' Priesthood Whose Name is placed emphatically at the end of the Proposition - **He is a priest by the Power of an indestructible life**... [cf. v. 16]. And this phrase constitutes anew an excellent transition with the principal subject of this Document, announced in Heb 5:9-11:

... Although He was Son, He learned to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, He became for all who obey Him the source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed by God with the title of High Priest of the Order of Melchisedek...[Heb 5:9-11].¹⁰⁴



[III] THE SECOND VEIL

...The first **Covenant** had its laws governing worship and its sanctuary, a sanctuary on this earth. There was a tent which comprised two compartments: the first in which the lamp-stand, the table and the presentation loaves were kept was called the Holy Place'; then the **second veil**, an innermost part which was called the **Holy of Holies**, to which belonged the gold altar of incense, and **the Ark of the Covenant**, plated all over with gold In this were kept the gold jar containing the manna, Aaron's branch that grew the buds and the stone tablets of the Covenant. On top of it was the **Throne of Mercy**, and outspread over it were the glorious cherubs. This is not the time to go into greater detail about this... [Heb 9:1-5].



Introduction:

[1] The two central ideas of Heb 8 [the Priestly Ministry exercised by Jesus in Heaven: **leitourgia** - and the New Covenant: **diatheke**] are successively addressed anew in **Heb 9:1-14; 15-28**. Here there is a confrontation between the **Two Tabernacles** and the **Liturgy of Expiation** in both Covenants. Further, there is established a comparison which will be pursued up through Heb 10:18 - between the **Sacrifice of Jesus Christ** [the essential action of His Priesthood] - and the **Levitical sacrifices**.

¹⁰⁴ Spicq, OP, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, II, pp. 164-166.

[a] It will first of all be shown that the purification of consciences by the oblation of the Blood of Jesus Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary is more efficacious and sublime than the purification sought by the Liturgy of the earthly sanctuary

[b] The description of this Tabernacle and Ministry of the Great High Priest for the Festival of Expiation[cf. Heb 9:q-10], regarding the places and the actions of the Mosaic Cult is the exact counter-part of Heb 8:1-5] The deficiency of this institution, indicated in Heb 8:5, is underlined in Heb 9:8=10, notably regarding its ineffectiveness. Heb opposes this with that unique service offered by **Jesus Christ, the genuine High Priest of Mercy, the purifying strength of Whom is perfect!** [cf. 9:11-14].

[2] The **central idea** of this section is expressed in these verses:

*... But now Christ has come, as the High Priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect Tent, which is better than the one made by men's hands because it is not of this created order; and He has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with Him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but His own blood, having won an eternal redemption for us ... [arrived - passed through - won: a type of: *veni - vidi - vici!* - Heb 9:11-12].*

[a] The internal bond between these concomitant actions of Jesus the High Priest is implied in the tenses of the verbs apparently chosen with some deliberation. The emphasis is on the principal verb: **But now Christ has come... into the Temple on High, the Celestial Sanctuary**. This access He prepares for the ultimate declaration on the eternal redemption and the purification of consciences that this new Great High Priest of Mercy has accomplished with a view of obtaining these for all the Faithful [vv.14-15]. This is no sprinkling of the blood of sacrificial animals and their ashes – but rather, much more effectively, the Blood of Christ, **Who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal spirit**. This can purify our inner self so that we do service to the living God.

[b] This section is the perfect commentary on these words: **this is not the time to go into greater detail about this**. The remission of sins announced is well realized by the Sacrifice of Jesus and His heavenly oblation: **Christ offered Himself**. The earlier emphasis was on the blood and ashes of the sacrificial animals that was poured out. It is only the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ which can purify sin.

[c] What the author has done here was to call into sight the ancient principle of **Lv 17:11: The Life of all flesh is in the blood!** This blood works the effect of expiation by the life which is in it. It is easy to prove to a Believer that the Blood of Christ is infinitely beyond the intrinsic worth of bulls and goats - it is true for a number of reasons:

- firstly, this Precious Blood is the principle of the life of a Divine Person Who is immolated, not a sacrifice of brute animals;
- secondly, this Person is the Christ, the Anointed of God;

- He offers Himself lovingly, freely, spontaneously on the altar of the Cross; He is at one and the same time, the Great High Priest and the Victim - no substitute sacrifice [cf. Jn 10:18] In the celestial sanctuary He is the Principal Celebrant;
- He is the unblemished Victim, infinitely beyond all corporal perfection as that of the ancient sacrifices but is totally spiritual;
- The Precious Blood of His humanity takes all its value as Divine, Sacred Blood, which is totally, lovingly, voluntarily poured out on the Cross and it is all offered to God as an oblation.

[d] In the two kinds of Tabernacles and the two kinds of Blood there is summarized the infinite difference between the First Covenant [cf. Heb 8:13; 9:1-10] - and the New Covenant [cf. Heb 9:11-22, especially v. 15: ... **He brings a New Covenant, as the mediator, only so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance may actually receive what was promised: His death took place to cancel sins that infringed on the earlier Covenant ...**

[2] This section is therefore one of the most important of the entire Document from the doctrinal point of view. This eliminates from a further perspective the Mosaic Cult and that exalts Christ's sacrifice. The deficiencies of the former Covenant are not emphasized to lessen its temporary importance. The out-pouring of the blood of the animals was pure ceremony could only achieve a certain level of legal purity. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God, consciously and willingly is a redemptive action which has abolished sin.

[a] The Author does not refer to the Sanctuary of Jerusalem, namely that of Solomon [the Ark of the Covenant had disappeared from the Holy of Holies when the First Temple was burned - cf. Ezk], nor does He bring to mind at all the contemporary Jewish liturgy.

[b] His description is quite free, a portrait in broad strokes, borrowed from the Mosaic Ritual [following the texts of Exodus and Numbers], somewhat glossed by the living tradition. This explains certain imprecise aspects of the Epistle which one might call inexactitudes - because, on the one hand, the legislative texts were truly vague, and then on the other hand, the unknown redactor of this Document had not intended to give an authentically technical description of the Holy Place.

[c] Precision was not the main scope of the author: he only wanted to facilitate the comprehension of the ceremonies as these unfolded in the Sanctuary, as is proven by the manner in which he interrupts the descriptions, after a rather summary reference to them. There is hardly any clear description of the Liturgical furniture on use at that time, maintaining: **this is not the time to go into greater detail on this.**

[3] From the literary point of view, the parallelism is quite rigorous between Heb 9:1-10 and 11-14: ... **now Christ has come as the high priest of all the blessings**

which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent...

[a] The mastery of the redaction of the unknown author is revealed to us here as **St. Thomas** also pointed out: 'It is already evident that if these verses are carefully considered there are five realities concerning the Second Tabernacle, i.e., who enters it, but only the High Priest; secondly, the dignity and the condition of the place where he entered in that it is called the Holy of Holies; thirdly, how he entered, in this case with the blood; fourthly, when he entered, and that was only once a year; and fifthly why he entered, and the reason was it was for the expiation of sins. Here the Apostles explains all five of these realities. And first, just Who this is Who enters, , and it is Jesus Christ; secondly the author points out the dignity of the inner tabernacle, in that he makes clear: 'even further', and His condition, 'even more perfect'; thirdly, the author shows how He entered, and that is, in His own Blood; fourthly, when He entered, for all time which is like a year; fifthly the author shows how He entered, because it was for the offering for the ignorance of the People and not for His own, as He did not have any.'

[b] The Plan is the following: 1° the Description of the earthly Tabernacle; this is not the fault of the cultic means as the former Covenant was imperfect; but on the contrary was splendidly endowed [vv. 1-5]; 2° the Description of the respective ministry, those priests and the great high priest in the two compartments of the sanctuary [vv. 6-7]; 3°, the 'parable' of this Liturgy: the symbolic teaching of which the Holy Spirit Himself instructs us by this Ritual; and it is two-fold. On the one hand, heaven remains inaccessible; can not reach to God there; on the other hand, the consciences have not been purified, the material rituals can only have carnal effects [vv. 8-10]. But, the Christ penetrates into the Heavenly Sanctuary [v.11], by virtue of His own sacrifice [v. 12], He purifies the consciences [v.13] and allows us to reach God [v. 14]. The efficacy of this redemption depends therefore on the definitive entry of the great High Priest into the Temple.

†††

Verse 1: The first Covenant had its laws governing a worship and its sanctuary, a sanctuary on this earth ...

a. The structure here is a kind of synthesis, summary, of the ideas presented just above. This difficult beginning reveals that the author establishes the foundations of his thesis:

... The earlier commandment is thus abolished because it was neither effective more useful, since the Law could not make anyone perfect... one Who would not need to offer sacrifices every day as the other high priests do for their own sins and for those of the people , because He has done this once and for all by offering Himself... [Heb 7:18, 27].

...we have a high priest exactly of this kind. He has His place at the right of the Throne of Divine Majesty in the Heavens. He is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tent of Meeting which the lord and not any man has set up... [cf. Heb 8:1,ff.].

b. He prepares himself for the subsequent developments inherent in the rupture between 8:13 and 9:1:

... By speaking of a New Covenant, He implies that the first is already old now anything old only gets more antiquated until in the end it disappears...[Heb 8:13]

... The first covenant also had its laws governing a worship and its sanctuary ... on this earth... [Heb 9:1].

From the verb structures, the careful reader can read of the abrogation of the Mosaic Ritual and the Levitical Priesthood that have been surpassed. As the redactor of the Document to the Hebrews had brought at the end of the preceding Chapter the imminent disappearance of the former religious organization. He pauses a moment now on the glories of the former covenant, having placed them in opposition with the supreme glory of the organization of the new Christian Covenant. Indeed if the author described so minutely the plan and the content of the Sanctuary of ancient Israel, this is because God Himself had determined these, from whence the actual value of the symbolism derives. In fact, Heb will restore to the juridical present or description: *...but, the second Tent!* [Heb 9:6-10] - *... it is the duty of every High Priest to offer gifts and sacrifices ...* [Heb 8:3].

c. The 'old' justification depended on the Law [cf. Dt 6:1; 8:11; 2 K 17: 13; Lk 1:6: ... they scrupulously observed all the commandments and observations of the Lord...] - or on the ancient Judgments [cf. Nb 15: 16; 1 M 2:21, f.]. This meant therefore: precept, ordinance, positive law or established custom. Here, there is understood prescriptions of a religious order, and especially liturgical regulations. The term is frequently employed with a genitive, signifying both the authority which establishes these prescriptions:

... They know what God's verdict is ... [Rm 1:32].

... The precepts of the Lord are upright, joy for the heart; the commandment of the Lord are clear, light for the eyes... [Ps 19:6].

... Both Zechariah and Elizabeth] were worthy in the sight of the Lord, and scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of the Lord ... [Lk 1:6].

... If a man who is not circumcised obeys the commandments of the Law, surely that makes up for not being circumcised ... [Rm 2:26].

...He did in order that the Law's just demands might be satisfied in us, who behave not as our unspiritual nature but as the spirit dictates ... [Rm 8: 4].

... he shall deal with her according to the ruling for daughters ...[cf. Ex 21:9].

... Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they cared nothing for the lord Go, nor for the rights of priest as regards the people... [1 S 2:9].

d. **The Old Covenant** was endowed with the entire complexity of precise liturgical rules for the exercise of **Liturgy** [*latreia*] in the one and only sanctuary:

... When you enter the Land that the Lord God is giving you, as He promised, you must keep to this ritual . And when you children ask you: 'What does this ritual mean? ... [cf. Ex12:25, f.].

...when the Lord God brings you to the land ... you are to hold this service... [Ex 13:5].

The emphasis is not only on the fact that the Old Covenant does have its own Sanctuary proper to it, but bringing out the more its Liturgical value. Its role for centuries needs to be brought forward in order to elaborate the existence and the nature of the Heavenly Sanctuary. The 'type' has no meaning other than in its function toward the antitype. This is the only case in the entire OT where the term is taken in the sense of the local sanctuary. [cf. Ex 26:33, 34; 29: 30; Nb 3:38; 28:7; Ezk 45:4, 18; 48:8]. It designates here the complexity of the holy places without any distinction of one over the other of its parts.

e. It clearly has 'cosmic' [*kosmikon*] overtones - for Josephus, the temple of Jerusalem represented the entire **universe**. The Great High Priest officiated there in the name of the entire human race. On the vestments of the great High Priest there were figured cosmic elements [cf. Riciotti] - on the **Temple Veil** was the image of the Universe. Some of the Greek Fathers [like John Chrysostom] took up this symbolism again and came to understand that the sanctuary was accessible to all, even to the Gentiles. This was an interpretation thought to be unacceptable as the underlying image was that of the desert sanctuary. There may be a play on Greek words: *kosmos*; *kosmikos* : .. women are to wear suitable clothes and to be dressed modestly and quietly ... [cf. 1 Tm 2:9] - ... the president [bishop?] must have impeccable character ...[cf. 1 Tm 3:2] - the implication being: **well ordered, richly endowed**. This epithet might indeed apply to the **Temple built by Solomon**, or later that of **Herodias** - but such terms would scarcely apply to **the primitive Desert Tabernacle**. As a result, almost all the modern scholars come to understand that *kosmikos* needs to be taken in its etymological acceptance, as that 'which pertains to the world, that which concerns the universe.' This understanding is well attested also in profane literature, as with Aristotle. However, there is a pejorative nuance as in the word **worldly** as may be noted in this text: ... God's grace taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained... [Tt 2:12]. The place of the Worship of the Old Covenant was not only for this world - but, it made up part of the physical and visible world - and in contrast to the **spiritual and celestial world** - and it participated in its **passing nature**. The place of this term at the end of the proposition accentuates this nuance: **a sanctuary, i.e., that is material, or for here below - a sanctuary on this earth**.

Verse 2: ***There was a tent which comprised two compartments: the first, in which the lamp-stand and the presentation loaves were kept, was called the Holy Place ...***

a. This description of the sanctuary and its furnishings is borrowed essentially from that of Ex 15-26. There had been set up and organized a early Tent - this was the **Holy of Holies**, in the neuter plural as in Ex 29:30; 39:1; **Ezk 44: 9, 11, 15, 16** - the definite article is missing at times: ... *no alien, uncircumcised in heart and body, is to enter My sanctuary ... the Levites are to be servants in my sanctuary... the Levitical priests did their duty in the sanctuary when the Israelites strayed far from me... they may enter My sanctuary...*

b. On entering in this Tent, there would be on the left [at the south], the seven branched candelabra stood [cf. Ex 25:31-39; 28:17-24; 1 M 1:21; 4:49]. The plural candelabra of the Vulgate seems to be alluding to the seven branches or the ten chandeliers of Solomon's Temple [cf. 1 K 7:49; 2 Ch 4:7], which were illumined night and day - at the right of the 'pure table' [cf. Lv 24:6], or the 'Table of the Exposition' [cf. Nb 4:7], the 'Holy Table', covered with gold. On this, in two piles of six were the 12 consecrated loaves [cf. 1 S 21:5] representing the 12 Tribes, renewed each Sabbath, then consumed by the priests [cf. Lv 24:5-9]. These remained exposed before God in on-going thanksgiving to the Author of all good - and they were referred to as the loaves placed before the face of God [cf. Ex 25:30; Mt 14:4] = these are the 'loaves, to be set out in rows Sabbath by Sabbath [cf. 1 Ch 9:32; 33:29; 2 Ch 13:11].

Verse 3: ... then beyond the Second Veil, at the innermost part which was called the Holy of Holies ...

This most holy of places and was separated by a veil [cf. Heb 6:19; Ex 26:32-35; Mt 28:51]. It was called the 'Second Veil' with regard to the first which was found at the very entrance of the Holy of Holies [cf. Ex 26:36]. There may be here a hint of two Tents, while the Mosaic sanctuary noted only one but divided into two parts. However, the fact of situating the Holy of Holies behind [and this is the sole usage of this Greek expression meaning local succession], the Second Veil seems to correct the confusion resulting from the redaction, and supposes one and the same Desert Tent divided into two compartments, each one having an entrance. One could not enter the Holy of Holies without passing through the first one.

Verse 4: .. to which belonged the gold altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant, plated all over with gold. In this were kept the gold jar containing the manna, Aaron's branch that grew the buds, and the stone tablets for the Covenant...

a. The Vulgate and St. Thomas identify this first object with a kind of burner, standing on poles, and full of burning coals [cf. Lv 16:12, 18-20]. This stands near the Altar of Holocausts the great high priest with take this with him going into the Holy of Holies on the great day of Expiation. He would throw perfumed frankincense into the fire of the censer, and the smoke that would issue from this hid the propitiatory from his eyes [cf, Lv 16:12-13; Si 50:9].

b. However, it is difficult to admit that an object of relative importance would be mentioned, while nothing is said of the Altar of Holocausts. Furthermore, the author indeed seems to describe the fixed furnishings in the sanctuary. Lastly, the biblical texts do not make precise ever if these were made of molten metals, of gold or of silver. Many authors would place the altar of perfumes one made of wood, plated with gold, and endowed with horns at the corners [cf. 2 M 2:5; Lk 1:11]. For which many authors provide a technical term. There does not seem to be much agreement whether or not this altar of perfumes was fixed to the floor as the main altar - or whether it was portable like the censer would be.

c. All the documents place this **Altar of Perfumes** in the Sanctuary before the Veil which conceals the Ark of Witness [cf. Ex 30:6; 40:26; Ezk 41:21-22]. It was located between the chandelier and the Table of the Breads of Proposition, slightly ahead of it. As well as its localization in the Holy of Holies can only with difficulty be attributed to an error or to a distraction that found its way into Hebrews. There are authors who think this transposition is intentional - the has in view the meaning for this altar, **symbol of the adoration of the people**, and uniting it ideally to the Ark, witnesses to the presence of God, and thinks of these by providing some kind of Liturgical connection [cf. 2 M 2:5].

d. In truth, Hebrews does not say specifically that this altar is in the Holy of Holies, but it belongs liturgically as the Altar of Holocausts to the Holy of Holies. This is all the more true in that it is found outside of the Tent of Meeting. One might also think that the unknown Author has in view the Liturgy of the one Great High Priest, who wishes to distinguish His offering of aromas in the Holy of Holies [cf. Lv 12:12, f.] from that of the incense presented morning and evening by the priests [cf. Ex 30: 7, ff.] - from whence the term the 'burnt-perfumes.'

e. These explanations are only fully satisfying when one adds the following observations: the Altar of Perfumes did not make up part of the description of the sanctuary furnishings as found in the Liturgical Torah of Ex 25-26 to which the author refers. It does not appear that after the passage in Ex 30:1-10 that the Samaritan Pentateuch in Ex 26:35. This text evokes at the same time with regard to the same author **the daily offering of incense** [cf. vv. 7-8] and the Sacrifice of the Great High Priest on **the Day of Expiation**. Furthermore, the localization of this altar is always quite vague above all in the version of the LXX [cf. Ex 3:6, 36; 40: 5, 26, 27; 1 K 6:19-23]. More exactly, if the altar appeared situated in the Holy of Holies, there is always placed in reference with the Propitiatory, the Witness or with the Ark, i.e., with the Holy of Holies [cf. the Samaritan Pentateuch as noted in Ex 40:26], which would have been noted with its ascending smoke. This reference would justify the redaction of Hebrews, the combustion of the incense on the altar, being the necessary condition for the entrance of the Great High Priest into the Holy of Holies.

f. Effectively, *The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, a contemporary of our Hebrews, evokes the appearance of an Angel in the Holy of Holies where the following are found: the Veil, the Propitiatory, the two Tables, the holy vestment of the Priests, 48 precious stones with which the Great High Priest would be decorated, all the holy utensils of the Tabernacle. Now, the majority of these objects were never

found in the Holy of Holies. Yet, the author does not confound this with the sanctuary, since there is no mention either of the Candelabra or the table of the Breads exposed.

g. Some authors note the Hebrews does not oppose these exegetically, but follows rather a **liturgical tradition**, doctrinally authorized. Furthermore, the symbolism has been able to contribute to the assigning this place on the Altar of the Perfumes, as it must be admitted that there is had in the heavens an altar:

... I saw the Lord God, seated on a high throne; His train filled the sanctuary; above Him stood the seraphs.. [cf. Is 6].

... The Lamb broke the seventh seal and there was silence in heaven for about one half hour. Next I saw seven trumpets... another angel had a golden censer... a large quantity of incense... the smoke of the incense went up in the presence of God... [Rv 8].

h. Consequently, the logical conclusion would be that this would have had to be in this most holy part of the Temple. Which served as **the figure of the heavenly sanctuary**. Furthermore, it is permitted to believe that at the moment when the Great High Priest would enter once a year into the Holy of Holies, he would once again draw the curtain on the Altar of Perfumes. This would have been placed there and would make up for the time a part of this sanctuary. In the final analysis, as scholars have noted, it is at least doubtful that the unknown author of Hebrews would have situated this Altar in the Holy of Holies itself. In any case, this is of little importance, because his essential thought bears more on the functions that the High Priest would carry out in the Holy of Holies. During this, on the Great Day of expiation, he would offer the sacrifice of incense - so that this Altar of Incense would appear as making up a part of the sacred furnishings.

j. The Ark was made of acacia wood [cf. Ex 25:10; 37:1-6]. Would be plated then with gold inside and out. This would disappear then from the Temple after the exile as noted by Jr [3:16]: the seat was empty, and the mysteries emptied.... But, it would have once made up an essential part of the sacred furnishings, in that it was believed to be the very Seat, Throne, Chair, of the Divine Majesty and the source of all benediction. Hence, over the years it merited titles such as: 'the Ark of God' [cf. 1 S 3:3] - 'the Ark of the Lord's Power' [cf. 2 Ch 6:41] - the 'Holy Ark' [2 Ch 35:3]. Thus the Seer contemplates it in the celestial Holy of Holies [cf. Rv 11:19]: ... **the sanctuary of God in heaven opened, and the Ark of the Covenant could be seen inside it ...**

k. Within there was a container, plated with gold that contained gomer of the remnant of the desert bread, the manna from heaven [cf. Ex 16:32-34]. This was the equivalent of a day's portion for a single person - a constant reminder of the paternal providence of the Lord God toward His people. There was likewise, Aaron's staff, a miraculous witness of his exclusive right to the Priesthood [cf. Nb 17:10] - and the two Stone Tables on which there was engraved the Decalogue [cf.

ex 25:16, 21; Dt 10:2-5; 2 Co 3:7]. These were designated 'Tables of Witness' in Ex 31:18; 32:15] as the Ark itself was so called at times [cf. Ex 16:34].

I. According to Dt 10:1-5; 1 K 8:9; 2 Ch 5:10 - the Ark contained only the Tables of the Law, the debris left over from the ancient authentic Tables of Sinai, an exemplary of the Torah and the Names of the Lord God which would be invoked before the Ark. This divergences of opinions need to be brought out. The most orthodox doctors of Israel were more archeologists and they brought forward the doctrinal presuppositions of the great license with real history and texts. Why, then, would one be more demanding of the unknown author of Hebrews who also was immersed in some lack of precision. This author has offered a technical description, and shows little concern for the significance of the point of view which he puts forward. There is need to understand these descriptions more in the broad sense, particularly regarding the three objects which accompanied the Ark, without distinguishing the Tables of the Law which were within it, and the other two objects which were placed along-side it.

Verse 5 ...***On top of it was the Throne of Mercy and outspread over it were the glorious cherubs. This is not the time to go into greater detail about this...***

a. After this referral to the exterior of the ark and its content, or the attending objects, the author brings out its dignity: the Throne of the Divine Majesty. The Propitiatory, 'the Place of Mercy', made of pure gold [cf. Ex 25:17] was sprinkled by the Great High Priest with the Blood of the victims in order to obtain pardon of the sins of Israel [cf. Lv 16:13, f.]. This leads to the technical term, *ilasterion*, meaning to **cover, expiate, pardon**.

b. The spread wings of the Cherubim, placed on the two extremities of the Ark and the formed a shadow, a 'cloud; over the entire Propitiatory. This was the **glory**, or the presence of God [cf. Lv 16:2] The genitive is not the equivalent of glorious, with allusion to the place of these figures, or the pure gold, of which they were made. Here, 'glory' has its technical meaning of the sensible manifestation of the presence of God in the Tabernacle, or the Temple [Ex 40: 34; 1 S 4:21, f.; 1 K 8"10-11]. God was thought of as seated or enthroned over the Cherubim is a common stance [cf. Is 37:16; Ps 80:2; Si 49:8, f.] deployed His mercy and His power in behalf of His people.

c. Each of these objects from the Mosaic era of worship and this specific disposition of the Sanctuary are rich in meaning. The Cherubim draw much attention. Our author, tempted to undertake this allegorical, or typological exegesis does not allow him to be detoured from his proposal. His renunciation of any further development is form current language: *this is not the time to go into detail about this* [cf. Heb 9: 5]. One would not err in seeing in each of these religious objects a figure of Jesus Christ: the 'Ark of the Covenant' [Is 42:6; 49:8], Propitiation [cf. 1 Jn 2:2]; the manna nourishing the soul [cf. Jn 6:49-50]; the Altar of Perfumes [cf. Rv 8:3] - inheriting from the hands of Aaron the scepter of the priesthood, and substituting for the Decalogue, with the New Law of Charity.

Verse 6: ... ***Under these provisions, priests are constantly going into the outer tent to carry out their acts of worship ...***

a. From the above-noted summary description of the sacred place of worship and its furnishings, the unknown author of Hebrews passes here to that of the liturgical celebration itself, notably to the Liturgical observance of the **Day of Expiation** [cf. Lv 16]. The symbolism was better adapted to the doctrine which it wishes to expose on the **Sacrifice of Jesus Christ**. The particularities of this Memorial about to be described here, tends completely toward showing the imperfections of the old worship, thanks to which there will appear the more by contrast the **superiority of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ**.

b. The first of these imperfections is that of **confining the priests in the outer art if the Temple Sanctuary and of forbidding them access to the Holy of Holies**, where the Divine Presence was manifested. Indeed, to this distinction between the 'Holy' and the 'Holy of Holies' corresponds the contrast between the Liturgy proper to the Great High Priest and that of the simple priests. These latter are constantly going into the 'Holy' section, outside the Holy of Holies. This action goes on 'without ceasing', 'without interruption' [cf. Mt 18:10; Ac 24:16]. To express this there is employed notably in this regard with regard to a cultic activity [cf. k 24:53; Ac 10:2].

c. The priests would go to offer the incense and morning and evening on the Altar of Perfumes, to watch over the seven lamps of the chandelier might remained illuminated. Each week they would change the Breads of Proposition, thus accomplishing their cultic services. Using the Greek word *latreias*. This is a key word in this section [cf. vv. 2, 9, 14]. This word often retains a cultic sense.

Verse 7: ... ***but the second tent is entered only once a year, and then only by the High Priest who must go in by himself and take the blood to offer for his own faults and for the people's ...***

a. Only the Great High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies and that, **only once a year** - and this absolute rarity is the second imperfection of the ancient liturgy. Without doubt his unique ministry authorized him to penetrate o several occasions into the Holy of Holies on that one day of Expiation [cf. Lv 16:2-16] - but only with great precaution! There was always a danger of deaeth, a truly redoubtable concern. Thus, entrance was only allowed three or four comings and goings fixed by the ritual and tradition: to keep the incense burning, for the two aspersions, to make sure the censer was handy.

b. The implication here is **the ever-present danger of violating a capital prescription in the exercise of this sublime office**. Each High Priest made sure he would have with him a supply of sacred blood from a sacrificial victim which would immunize him in some manner. And this is the third imperfection and an

essential difference with the ministry of the simple priests in the 'Holy' section, outside the Holy of Holies.

c. In accord with Lv 16, the Great High Priest would sacrifice a bull and would offer expiation for himself and his own house [cf. vv. 11-13; Heb 7:27] - then, dipping his finger into the blood of the slaughtered beast, he would asperge the Propitiatory and its eastern side, thus purifying the sanctuary from the stains of its priests [v. 14]. Thus, on returning to the Altar of Holocausts for the immolation of a bullock, he would enter - for the third time - into the Holy of Holies, and would recommence an aspersion with the blood of the bullock, purifying the sins of Israel [cf. vv. 15-16].

d. Hebrews blocks all these bloody aspersions, and seems to limit their efficacy since they would only purify the sins of ignorance or of weakness. Since these can be expiated in the course of the regular year by the sacrifice of a young bull, thanks to the ministry of a simple priest [cf. Lv 4:1-6:7], some scholars would be tempted to reserve for the Liturgy of Expiation its universal and infallible expiatory virtue and to make a synonym out of 'sinful' [cf. Jdt 5:20; Tob 33; Si 23:2; 1 M 13:39].

e. However, it is known for Hebrews, faults of malice can never be remitted [cf. 6"4-6' 10:26]. Therefore the unknown author seems to employ intentionally 'sin' in the sense of a real lack, a sin of inadvertence [cf. Gn 43:12; Si 51:19] - this brings out the impotency of the old Law to purify all sins. Furthermore, Hebrews represents here again a contemporary opinion. The view was the Yom Kippur would not completely sins, eliminating the danger of death by the sentence of a tribunal - or, implying a profanation of the name of heaven.

Verse 8: ... ***By this, the Holy Spirit is showing that no one has the right to go into the sanctuary as long as the outer tent remains standing*** ...

a. The redactor of the Document explains now the symbolic sense of the Ritual of expiation, which the Holy Spirit reveals by the liturgical dispositions themselves, which He has prescribed for Moses in the Liturgical Torah. With these he had no need further of an inspired commentary. This ceremonial has its own spiritual meaning. Since the simple faithful were never admitted into the Holy segment of the sanctuary [cf. Lk 1:9] outside the Holy of Holies and especially that this latter was accessible solely to the great High Priest in conditions that were indeed exceptional.

b. In other words that gateway to the Holies was not a free pass, i.e., not only towards the sanctuaries, the earthly residence of God Himself, but towards the Celestial Sanctuary of which this Holy of Holies was the symbol and the copy. In other terms, the old Liturgy, with its priesthood, its Tent of Meeting, the Law, the Covenant, did not provide people access to God. And as long as this would remain in vogue, it would remain as a barrier, an obstacle to divine union.

c. The duration of the first Covenant is served by the function of the existence of the first tabernacle, and this symbolizes the impossibility of getting into heaven, the authentic Sanctuary. This is what the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Author of this ceremonial and of the biblical texts has made known continually, whether manifestly [cf. 1 Co 1:11; 3:13] or whether letting this be known in some way [cf. 12:27; 2 P 1:14]. The verb used here can have two meanings: and this is against the heretics, who say that the OT is not of the Holy Spirit but of the evil god [cf. St. Thomas]. One might notice how a **spiritual sense** prevails here as in the exegesis of St. Thomas: **The Christ being designated as the Gate and the Way, in that there is no other entry-way into heaven, which without Him would remain inaccessible. Thus, the symbolism of the rupture of the Temple Veil at the death of Jesus** [cf. Mt 27:51].

Verse 9: ... **it is a symbol for this present time. None of the gifts and sacrifices offered under these regulations can possibly bring any worshipper to perfection in his inner self** ...

a. The spiritual meaning of this ceremonial arrangement is that under the old Covenant the people had no access to God. Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ Himself is the Way to the father [Jn 14:6; cf. Heb 10:19 +]. The abrogation of the old worship can thus be appropriately symbolized by the Temple curtain splitting wide open at the death of Jesus.

b. Verse 9 interprets this notification of the Holy Spirit Who makes use of the actual placing of the furnishings and the liturgy of the sanctuary. The Mosaic Ritual served as a Parable in act, i.e., an analogy, a parallel, or rather a symbol, a teaching - both for the later Christian Liturgy and for the messianic times

c. The distribution of the sanctuary into two compartments and the prescriptions of the ceremonial relative to each, figure the entrance of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, into heaven in order to exercise there His ministry of propitiation for sins. And further: the permanent lesson for the contemporaries and the participants of the Mosaic Liturgy. This is the **kairos**, present moment of redemption [cf. 2 Th 2:2; Rm 8:38; Ga1:4; 1 Co 3:22; 7:26].

d. Every Israelite participant in the Worship by the ministry of their priests, had to be instructed in spiritual truth that each needed a spiritual purification necessary for the deliverance from sin. Without this, one could not expect to achieve the end toward which he tended: the spiritual perfection and moral renewal, personal union with God [cf. 8:10-12]. At the very least, if one had come to understand well the dispositions of the ritual, this personal impotence would have been experientially quite clear. This lesson had to last for a very long time, like the Liturgy itself.

Verse 10: ...**they are the rules about the outward life, connected with foods and drinks and washing at various times, intended to be in force only until it should be time to reform them...**

a. This verse insists with a pejorative nuance, or rather of sadness and deception regarding this incapacity of the ancient liturgy to purify in an interior way.

All this liturgical pomp these sacred rites, these precious and venerable objects are inactive! Indeed, how the means, also those carnal, could be efficacious for the soul. Their very nature even shows that they are inadequate for the end pursued [cf. 10:4, 11].

b. It is a question only of those sacrifices and oblations of material objects, with, among other realities, those purely food laws and the multiple ablutions [cf. 1 Co 9:10; 2 Co 9:6; Ga 5:13]. There are indications of an abundance and accumulation [cf. Lk 3:20; 2 Co 7:13]. The author refers to the Levitical rules relative to the distinction between the foods that are pure and impure [cf. Lv 11], to the interdiction to eat the flesh of the victims and their fat [cf. Lv 7:16-27] - to drink the fermented liquids [cf. Lv 10:8-11; Nb 6:3; cf. Ex 32:6; 1 Co 10:2-4] - the ablutions [cf. Ex 29:4; Lv 11:25, 40; 14:7; 15:5; 16:4, 24, 28; Nb 8:7; 19: 17] - to which the contemporary tradition attached a considerable importance [cf. Mk 7:2-4].

c. All these external observances are somewhat counter-custom, often with the nuance of being imposed. The Greek Fathers have insisted on this onerous character. The efficacy of these precepts and customs are in inverse ratio to their weight, it might be said. But, these are provisory and they will only last until that period when they will be redressed or rectified, as predicted by Jr.

d. If, therefore, the Levitical system represented by the Tabernacle of Moses is in the last analysis, the recitation of one that failed. This institution ought to turn the attention of human beings towards that time of reform [cf. Ac 3:21] - the *apokotastasis*. This means the Messianic times [cf. Col 2:16-17], or the divine yoke will be lighter to carry [cf. Mt 11:29].

e. Jesus Christ will operate as a new source of religion, a re-constitution of the Liturgy under a spiritual manner [cf. Jn 4:23]. He would eliminate all that was provisory correcting that in which the tradition had deviated, and above all, giving their full efficacy to the Rites and to the prayers - i.e., as the subsequent verses point out: **interior purification** and **access to God**. The former Liturgy fully in relationship toward the future new Cult, and enjoyed only a meaning subordinated to what lay ahead - it was but an attempt, the main Event, **a Savior Priest** [Heb 11].

Verse 11: ... ***But now Christ has come, as the High Priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect Tent, which is better than the one made by human hands because it is not of the created order...***

a. The preceding paragraph insisted on two points: the materiality of the Rites, their impotency to purify consciences. Hebrews opposes in one outstanding manner not so much a new institution, but the very **Person Himself of the great High Priest** officiating in **the Heavenly Temple** and the efficacy of His sacrifice. In Him, there is resumed the entire **Salvific Liturgy**.

b. Jesus Christ enters onto the scene at a very decisive moment of history, as coming from another world. And He comes to play His role: to be present, to come upon the scene, to come to the assistance [cf. LK 11:6; 12:51; 1 Co 16:3]. It

is more evocative of the **arrival of Jesus Christ** than the simple coming [cf. 1:4; 6:20; 7:26]. The papyrus give Him the acceptance if having arrived among His own. The word implies the image of one presenting himself before a judge [cf. Heb 12:23] in order to be understood.

c. Jesus presents Himself as **a supreme High Priest** [cf. Heb 4:14]. One might be tempted to translate **xristos** [without the definite article]: '**An Anointed one.**' Jesus, having **received His pontifical anointing from His Incarnation** could not come into this world in any other manner than as a Priest. And indeed, certainly not as his proto-type, the great Aaronitic priest, in order to be Mediator merely of an earthly and failing Covenant - but, rather **in order to procure for human beings spiritual and eternal goods** [cf. v.15; 22:5; 3:1: 13:14]. His Priestly service is defined by its ultimate purpose: the accomplishment of salvation - it is **essentially eschatological** [cf. Is 9:6: **Father of the world to come!**]

d. The first characteristic of the superiority of Christ's Priestly undertaking, of the sanctuary where this is accomplished, is the Heavenly Sanctuary through which He penetrates even to God. From the Greek and Latin Fathers, even unto modern times, interpret the word **through** in the **instrumental sense** [not accepted by all] and hold that Jesus Christ has entered into this Heavenly Sanctuary **by means of a better Tent**, which would be **His own humanity** [cf. Mk 14:58; Jn 1:14; 2:19; Col 2L 9] - the **Tent** designating the body in 2 Co 5:4; 2 P 1:13, 14]. It designates His human flesh, and it is under a just title that it has been called 'greater, more perfect', since the God Logos and His omnipotence of Spirit dwell in it' [Chrysostom].

e. However, the author refers to a Tent not made by human hands, meaning **the human nature** which the Sovereign Christ has assumed, which does not follow the law of a nature dwelling in this creation. Jesus dwelt uniquely in the Virgin Mary - many classical theologians, the militant Church provides the access to the Church Triumphant. The Christ in Heaven has not set aside His human nature which remains united to Him and it is impossible to maintain that that this glorious body is not of this creation. Furthermore, as some exegetes note the whole context favors the **local sense** of the word **through**.

f. Lastly, Hebrews has keeps in view the Celebration of the Festival of Expiation, and it opposes this to the entrance of Jesus Christ into heaven to the entrance of the Great High Priest of old into the Holy of Holies, **through the veil** [v. 3; 6:19]. The parallelism that is so rigorous in this passage, does not permit the student to identify the crossing of the Holy of Holies to the assumption of humanity by the Incarnate Word. What should be understood here is that Jesus Christ, after His Resurrection and by His Ascension, penetrated into the heavens above in order to arrive gloriously in the presence of God [cf. 4: 14; 7:26; Ep 4:10].

g. It is the culmination of His priestly service to enter into the center, into the very heart and core of the 'place' where God dwells - i.e., into the Celestial Sanctuary [cf. v. 24; 8:1-2], evoked by contrast with the Mosaic Sanctuary. While this latter does serve as the Model for this latter, the human nature of Jesus Christ is

therefore the more perfect and the better, as the ideal and the reality with regard to all that participates and serves only as the shadow of what is coming. There is the old Latin principle: 'the more ample, in accord with its immense multiplicity of goods is always the more perfect, because in this all imperfection will cease! [St. Thomas Aquinas]. Some verses [e.g., v. 24; Mk 14:58; Ac 7:48; 18:24] clearly maintain clearly pejorative nuance - and are comparable to the idols in the OT [cf. Lv 26:1, 30; Jdt 8:18; Is 2: 18; 10:11].

h. This could also retain here is classical nuance: all that is imaged by an artifice, which does not exist in reality, would underline the superiority of what is 'real' - the consistency of the perennial nature of the Divine Sanctuary to any encounter with its copies. Simply said, the superior sanctuary 'is not of this world.'

Verse 12: ... and He has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with Him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but His own blood, having won an eternal redemption for us ...

a. This is the principal contrast between the sacrifice offered by the Jewish great High Priest on the Festival of Expiation and that offered by Jesus Christ. The means of the implied proof here is the following: the price of the blood is measured from the value of its source. The Great High Priest would not enter into the Holy of Holies more than once a year [v. 7] and also he would not be able to present himself there other than thanks to the virtue of the blood of the victim [cf. Lv 16:15].

b. This is offered for the sins of the people, named first of all as being the most characteristic of the Day of Expiation, and of the young bull [cf. v. 13; Lk 15:23] for one's own sins. The plurals even though one would immolate either a bull or bullock, are used without doubt as general formulae and, so to speak, stereotypes.

c. Jesus has entered into heaven - never more to leave from there [cf. 8:27; Rm 6:10], once and for all - due to the unique virtue of his own precious blood, i.e., on the sacrifice of His Passion. There is much emphasis on **His own** [cf. Jn 5:18] - this is not just any kind of a property, but it is His Own Precious Blood, most personal to Him, being properly and privately His - from His own veins - as the Blood of the Lamb [cf. Rv 5:9, 12, 13].

d. This unique means is so efficacious that by this unique action, Jesus Christ has obtained for us an eternal redemption. The **permanent** validity of this is essentially tied to this definitive penetration into heaven - the verb forms here express all this as the one and sole action [cf. 2:10]. Before Him a total and spiritual purification was both unknown and impossible - hence, the insistence of the Prophets to denounce the superstition of the sacrifices, as though they had value from the very fact the sacrifices were offered [like a novena, chain letter, etc.], independently from one's repentance in order to please God [cf. Is 1:10-17; Ho 6:6, etc.]. St. John Chrysostom insists on the nuance of surprise from the Greek verb [*eurisko*] - but this verb and its correspondent Hebrew also has the meaning of to

win, to conquer, to gain, to procure [cf. Mt 10:39; 11:29; 16: 15; Lk 1: 30]. All the other Pontiffs interceded for merely a temporal redemption - whereas Christ sought an eternal redemption. [Cajetan].

e. It is necessary to insist on the evident liaison what is offered and blood - the blood is the price of redemption, ransom cf. 1 Co 6:20; 7:23] and the condition of the entry into heaven [cf. 2:9]; it is a question of a sacrifice offered once and for all, that once consummated, allowed the High Priest to enter into the heavenly sanctuary, a sojourn which consecrates the eternal validity of His work. Thus there is demanded the parallelism with the Mosaic Liturgy and its syntax. After a principal verb, the aorist participial expresses a concomitant action, or one subsequent to that of the principal verb [cf. 2 M 11:36; Ac 12:25; 16: 6; 25:13]. Some exegetes point out that the median way ought to point out the result obtained by Jesus Christ as the fruit desired from His own personal effort.

f. However, it is known in the *koine*, the means often has the meaning of the active. That which characterizes this ransom is the being freed from sin - the most spectacular work of the new High Priest - it is its **eternal character**. He has acquired for us forever definitively assured by a single act. That is to say that the sacrifice of the Cross will never have to be repeated -its power of expiation remains forever [cf. 7:27]

Verse 13: ...The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer are sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement and they restore the holiness of their outward lives; ...

a. These last verses furnish the proof of the redemption and underline the virtuality of the blood that is shed: purifying consciences. They compare this to the sacrifices of animals by a kind of *a fortiori* argument. These latter had a certain efficacy, but in their proper sphere, they procure ritual purity. Furthermore, the Blood of Christ, of course, can purify the soul!

b. The proof sometimes used is: 'if the blood of the brute animals could accomplish something far less, then surely the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ could accomplish that which is far greater.' [St. Thomas Aquinas]. The blood of victims and bulls made some allusion to the aspersion by the great High Priest of old in the Holy of Holies for the Feast of Expiation [cf. Lv 16:14-15].

c. Furthermore any Israelite who would touch a cadaver, or was in contact with the ashes of a red cow [the color of blood] immolated outside the camp, then burned in the fire [cf. Nb 19] would experience an effect. This usage, though, seems to have fallen into disuse in the 1st century, and the last such 'red cow' would have been immolated under the great High Priest, Ismael, the son of Phiabi, about the year 36 before the Christian era. According to Maimonides, the great High Priest, as a precautionary measure would asperge himself with water on the 3rd and 7th Day of the Yom Kippur week.

d. A new indication that our author of Hebrews is not referring to the contemporary ceremonial, but attaches himself to the biblical exegesis, and without

doubt is depending upon of tradition of the schools. The expiatory rics [cf. Mk 7:4; Nb19:9] certainly rendered the faithful apt to partake in worship, 'sanctifying' them, but however only procured for them an exterior purity, one called 'legal', juridical: purity of the flesh it was called, at least as far as their proper efficacy is concerned. Only faith put into practice by this symbolism could obtain furthermore a spiritual purification [cf. Lv 4:1-5:5; 16:16].

Verse 14: ...how much more effectively the blood of Christ, Who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God, through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our service to the living God...

a. The precious Blood of Jesus Christ has a virtuality that is quite superior [cf. Heb 10:29; Mt 7:11; Rm 11:24]. This is so most likely because that of the animals were only meant to serve as intermediaries, as indirect means of purification, in that Jesus Christ gives His own Precious Blood Even more surely: in the one case, the blood is that of the east; in the other case, the blood is that of the Divine Son of God!

b. However, provides the contrast: on the one hand, the sacrifice of animals, forced to undergo immolation and are massacred. Then, on the other hand, the victim presents Himself and brings Himself to the immolation, He offers Himself in full freedom to death. The immolated animals have to be integral, without any blemish or corporal fault, a technical designation of ritual purity in the language of sacrifices [cf. Ex 29:1]. However, this term is also susceptible to a moral signification as in Heb 7:26; 1 P 1:19].

c. Christ, though, is totally without sin [cf. Heb 4:15] He is Holiness Itself - no victim had ever before had this perfection and could not therefore be offered with more fruit. For the liturgical demands of cultic purity, Hebrews substitute these personal and moral conditions of the efficacious sacrifice. Lastly, instead of victim animals, the dignity of the Messiah, the King-Priest, acting through a unique spirit - i.e., not with some disposition of Spirit, nor of his own soul, nor solely with the Holy Spirit. He acts always under His own personal inspiration and instinct, in the Divine charity for God and His neighbor, has He done all this. [St. Thomas].

d. Jesus acts in virtue of His own divine personality and out of His own personal power, with His own transcending virtuality, which assured Him of an eternal life and priesthood, lasting even through death. He has the right of being identified according to Heb 7:16, 24, as His is a divine nature. As this eternal divinity is designated by the term *pneuma*, it is because His nature is **spiritual** [Jn 4:24] - but also by opposition to the *sarx* [vv. 13-14] and in order to bring out more the virtuality in the spontaneity in the immolation with which animals are deprived.

e. This clarification is brought forward by the concern of bringing out once more the contrast between Jesus' sacrifice and the Levitical worship. This permits on the one hand that of concluding concerning the eternal priest and of the Victim without blemish, and of comprehending that this former survived the immolation of the latter. Furthermore, on the other hand this brings out the virtuality beyond all

comparison of the sacrifice [due to the Hypostatical Union], Chosen and undergone in this spirit of eternity' this immolation can have only an **eternal efficacy**.

f. The effects of the sacrifice depend, therefore, on the dignity of the Priest and the perfection of the Victim. In place of the purity of the flesh, it is that of the conscience which is obtained. Those 'dead' works, i.e., sins [cf. Heb 6:1] are pardoned [cf. Heb 2:17]. From this moment on, and positively, the believer is enabled to live religiously, to accomplish through his/ her entire earthly existence a liturgy worthy of the living God [ccf. Heb 8:10-12; Rm 12:1]. The ultimate antithesis between God and sin is that of death to life.

g. This is the supreme object of the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ [cf. Rm 1:9; Ph 3:3]. He gives to all those who benefit by His mediation of participating in His Heavenly Liturgy, totally orientated to the glory of God> 'From which it follows evidently that without Jesus Christ no one can serve the living God' [Luther] The life of the Christian is that of a priest, purified and consecrated united to God [cf. 1 P 2:5; Rv 22:3].

h. The one who is qualified as 'living' this is precisely because Jesus Christ is the source of this renewal of the interior life [cf. Heb 3:12]. These last words, happily emphasized at the end of the phrase and showing a contrast with the 'dead works', attesting at one and the same time, the theocentrism of the unknown author of Heb. It is toward the only true God toward Whom tend all the efforts of the just of the old Law. It is the Christ who gives to all believers the capacity of arriving there. To adore the living God and to be united with Him is the ultimate purpose of all men, and the entire religious economy.



5. COMPARISONS: The Sign of the Torn Veil

[1] The Pierced Side of Jesus Christ [Jn 19:31-37]:

... When they came to Jesus, they found that He was already dead, and so, instead of breaking His legs, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water...

The theme of the Torn Temple Veil does not appear in Jn. However, the death of Jesus is followed by this episode of the Pierced Side. It might be recalled here in the episode of the Purification of the Temple [Jn 2:13-22], following the episode of Cana, that in Jn this is situated at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, after its anticipated sign in Cana. It is stated clearly that Jesus, speaking of reconstructing the Temple in three days, **considered the Temple to be His own Body** [cf. Jn 2:21].

The torn Temple Veil and His Pierced Side seem to be parallels: these two themes are not totally estranged from one another. From the Pierced Side of Jesus there flowed Blood and Water (Eucharist and Baptism – cf. 1 Jn 5) [cf. Jn 19:34] – this leads the careful student of John to ponder the discourse of Jesus on the last and greatest day of the Festival of Tents, when Jesus had invited anyone who was thirsty to come to Him and to drink from the Streams of Salvation [Jn 7:37]. Jn's text

presents Jesus at that time as fulfilling the Scriptures, which, according to Him, would have these words: ***From His Side will flow streams of living water*** [Jn 7:38]. Even if he was not specifically speaking of some biblical quote, there is here a reference to a number of texts from which it is easy to deduce that the temple is the ultimate source of living water.

The Jesus of Jn very clearly, then, is **the Temple of God** [cf. Jn 1:51; 7:38; cf. also Ezk 47:1-12; Jl 4:18, Zc 13:1; 14:1]. He is presented as such from the scene of the Purification of the Temple onward, as this contains a recollection of the death-resurrection, most likely already in Jn 1:51. The Pierced Side of Jesus on the Cross, from which flow Blood and Water, identify Jesus as the authentic Temple of God. He is thus the Source of Life for all those who are thirsty and will come to drink joyfully [Is 12:1, ff.] from the abundant Streams of Salvation. In applying to Jesus the mysterious passage of the ***Pierced One***, of Zc 12:10, in which there are identified in some manner God and the Envoy Whom they pierced, the 4th Gospel presents Jesus indeed, and the Pierced Jesus, as the Place of Encounter with God.

If Jn were to have interpreted the sign of the Torn Temple Veil, and it seems quite evident that he did, it should be said that indeed he kept this sign from His being on the Cross. It is not longer the Temple now which will show the way to God, but rather this is the Mission of the One Whose side was pierced. He is the Source, the Temple, the Dwelling Place of God.

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church offers this beautiful insight:

... Be especially attentive to the content and the unity of the whole of Scripture. Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's Plan of which Heist Jesus is the center and heart, open since His Passover. 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.¹⁰⁵ [CCC # 112]

[2] **The Torn Temple Veil in Mk with regard to Mt, Lk, Heb & Jn:** after this brief survey of other NT passages, the effort here will be to see what impact all of this has on Mk 15:38.

In the light of Mt 27:51 it might be concluded that Mk 15:38 does not connect, at least explicitly, the sign of the Torn Temple Veil to the cosmic upheaval at the resurrection of the dead, characteristic of the end of the world. At first glance, there is **not the same apocalyptic intensity**, it might be said. There does remain, however, that in the measure that one might read Mk 15:38 in a global attitude with regard to the Temple which the Gospel Mk seems to present to the careful reader, and the affinities of Jesus with the 'baptist' movement of His time. In this connection, the Tearing of the Temple Veil seems to many to offer a symbolic language calling to mind **the end of the temple, and the end of that way of life that centered around**

¹⁰⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. In Ps 21, 11.* cf. Ps 22:15.

the Temple of Jerusalem. If this is true, then it is easy to go back to Jesus' announcement regarding the destruction of the Temple [Mk 13:2] and to those connections with **the end of the world** which the Temple destruction wrongly or rightfully has in Mk 13. This seems to be the view of the disciples as the reader judges from the question attributed to them [Mk 13:4]. There is the appearance of a profanation, the 'abomination of abominations'. It is not specified precisely what this would be. At any rate, one gets the impression that the coming of the Son of Man is close. The presentiment is afforded that Jesus' Mission expressed in Mk 11:15-18 and its varied relationships are difficult to clarify: in the connection with the destruction of the Temple – and that of the profanation of the Temple. Furthermore, there is not always clear the relationship of the light and the shadows between the dying Jesus and His Great Cry and the temple Veil being torn. These all seem to clarify one another.

In the light of Lk 23:45, or better the tie: the darkness and the Torn Temple Veil [v. 44, ff.] preceding the serene death in the Lukan account offers some insight into the Torn Veil account in Mk, which is **far more dramatic**. If Lk seems to place the reader with the two signs, in the presence of **a God displeased** with the human activity and the Crucifixion of Jesus – in Mk, the emphasis seems much more on his concern of presenting the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil as a sign of **the end of the Temple**, and of showing that this end of the Temple is tied in with Jesus' death. The account might leave some with the impression that the end of the Temple has something to do with the Mission of Jesus, as with **the summit of this Mission of His**. Furthermore, the fact that Mk situates the two signs of the **Dark Hours** and the **Torn Temple Veil**, the one immediately prior to the other, according the account in Mk 15:34-37 – this is contrary to Luke. He places these two elements of the account at the service of **emphasizing the more the death of Jesus**. To many scholars Mk 15:33 and 38, which call to mind the events that are not the result of human intervention, but these contribute by their own situation in the text, to enhance Mk 15:34-37 as **an event surpassing the daily human reality**. These signs bring it about through the death of Jesus that these different themes express a distancing that **brings greater emphasis to the elements of the Transfiguration account**.

When pondered more in accord with the elements of Hebrews, this priestly document brings out more **the world of the Temple**. Thanks to the image of **Jesus opening up the means of access to the Holy Spirit**, this also supplies us with the measures to follow after Him also in this. Mk 15:38 suggests more **the over-turning the world of the Temple** by the bringing out the image of the collapse of the Temple, and the concentration of attention on the **Cross of Jesus Christ, His Great Cry** – all of this emphasizes more the revelation of God in bringing all the depths of this message forward. The Confession of the non-believing Centurion leads the Church to **recognize the presence of God in the Crucified One**.

In the light of **the Pierced One** of Jn's Gospel – here the believer is led to **identify the Temple with the Body of Jesus Christ**. There is here the pressing invitation to think of the open side Jesus Christ as a Font from which one who is thirsty is invited to **drink joyfully the Streams of Salvation** [cf. Jn 7:37, ff.]. The scene of the roman lance piercing the side of the dead Jesus, thereby opening up the

Tabernacle Door of the Most Blessed Trinity, from which Baptism and Eucharist pour forth. Thus, the Pierced Side of Jn sheds precious light on Mk's Torn Temple Veil – providing access to the mysteries within.

Strongly nuanced, the false testimony directed against Jesus [14:57, 59: ... **we heard Him say: I am going to destroy this Temple...**], this declaration seems to reveal something important regarding the entire Gospel of Mk. The emphasis on 'I' destroy this Temple made by human hands, would clearly seem through this emphasis on Himself, that the over-all attitude of Jesus in this Gospel might be summarized: intimately connected to the Person of Jesus, there is the implication of the end of the Temple, this end of the regime in Jerusalem of the Temple. Jesus' proclamation that He would build another, which will not be made by human hands – is not all that easy to interpret. He seems to bring together the affirmation that is found twice in Acts [7:48; 17:24] that God does not dwell in Temples made by human hands. There is perhaps indirectly clarified by two NT texts that appeal to the same builder of the Temple, noted in Mk 14:58: [Jesus would destroy that Temple made by human hands, and build another, not made by human hands] would seem to refer more directly to the realities of a spiritual, higher order [2 Co 5:1; Col 2-11].

There is often the interpretation that there is implicit here a careful play on the same word, indicating Temple: sometimes it is **the material building; at other times, the personal body of the individual Christian; or the Community as such; or, the Heavenly, eschatological Temple** – all this might have some play, particularly this last one, on the 'Temple' that the Lord Jesus will build. If this is the real meaning here, the Torn Temple Veil which at one and the same time, announces the end of the way of life surrounding the Temple for the contemporaries of Jesus, the entire regime of the ancient Temple, all serves as the precursor for the new Christian community.

6. Further Development of the Torn Temple Veil within Mk [15:34]: according to Mk, from the instant that Jesus expires on the Cross, the Temple Veil is torn asunder. It is quite clear that the text invites the believer to associate this event of the Death of Jesus and this most unusual phenomenon of the Veil. At the same time, it is helpful to recall that what draws attention in the account of Jesus' death, is not just His dying in itself, but the fact that Jesus dies while uttering a loud prayer, His Great Cry from the Cross, which is articulated for us in the language that Jesus spoke: **Eloi, Eloi....** Mk's Gospel invites us therefore in some manner to compare both of these: Jesus' Great Cry and the Temple Veil torn asunder:

As for the Torn Temple Veil, it has been pointed out that Mk presents this as the sign of **the end of the Temple**, of its cultic, sacrificial regime, of which the Temple served for centuries as the symbol. It is also been noted that in Mk's perspective that if the Mission of Jesus led to the destruction of the temple made by human hands, this also led at the same time to the construction of a New temple, not made by human hands, that believers maintain is the community of which the **Roman Centurion** serves as the **prototype**. It will be the community of **those who will recognize the Son of God in the Crucified One**. The Torn Temple Veil seems

to have elements in common with Jesus' Baptism Scene: the Great Cry from the Cross is clarified by a close contemplation on the Torn Temple Veil.

a. Mk 15:34 and the end of the Temple made by Human Hands: there is in all this a certain Confession regarding the true identity of Jesus Christ. These verses affirm the following: Jesus is the Messiah, the Most Beloved, Only Begotten Son of God. He is the Just Man, unjustly persecuted, Who cries out His sense of abandonment in the Great Cry from the Cross. He is the Being in distress and the bystanders think He is calling upon Elijah, rather than on His Heavenly Father. **Everything is possible** for His Heavenly father [14:34]. He is rejected in the name of faith: Jesus gave the loud cry and sent forth His Spirit, by breathing His last.

Some exegetes have seen all of these inter-weaving themes, the rapid succession of them, one after the other. However, the Great Cry and the Tearing Asunder of the Temple Veil manifest a special inner cohesion, which is not always perceived. Some see a clear parallel with these vents of Mk 15:34-38 and the special sacrifice of Elijah on Carmel: ... **Answer me, O Lord, that this people may return to you...!** In considering the death of Jesus as the vehicle to express something of the mystery of God on two levels: in Mk 15:34-37, God is the One to Whom Jesus utters His Great Cry: **My God, My God ...!** - from His perspective, He is experiencing a profound sense of abandonment which He does not understand on all levels of His knowledge.

Furthermore, Mk 15:34-47 relates something further on God, since the overall message of the Gospel is presented as the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God [1:11]. As a result, in just as the Word of Jesus in the account of the Cross is a symbolic message on its interlocutor, as there is brought to the fore here the profound identity of this Messiah, of this Son of God. On the Cross, the Messiah, the Son of God, is the Crucified, the anguished One Who cries out in His abandonment and lack of comprehension of the reason for this 'abandonment' by the Father.

This Great Cry is its own language about God under a two-fold title: it seems to direct the grasp of the Torn Temple Veil that comes across as a clear sign of the end of the temple Regime. ON Carmel, precisely at the hour of the oblation, the text of 1 K 18 places this following prayer on the lips of the Prophet Elijah [**Elohim is Yahweh!**]:

... Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let them know today that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your Servant...Answer Me, so that this People may know that You, Yahweh, are God are winning back their hearts ... [1 K 18:36, ff.].

This account informs us that God had agreed with the ancient holocaust of Elijah on Carmel, and that He did not accept that of Baal [v. 29] – this also indicated the end of the Baal worship [v/ 40]. The People, when participating in this, proclaimed: **It is Yahweh Who is God...!** [V. 29]. On Golgotha, a prayer utters from the lips of Jesus Christ – this is at one and the same time an appeal which does not ask for definitive assistance but rather it is an appeal where the Confession of God is accompanied with a question on the reason for His abandonment. Following

on this Cry, and on this death accompanying the Cry, the Temple Veil is torn asunder, indicating the end of the temple regime, and conveying the Confession from a non-believer that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Some interpreters see the coming together of these two scenes in the Confession of the real truth about God against the unsatisfying conceptions regarding His face. Each scene places in bold relief a witness to the truth of God which, at the risk of His life, proclaims the true faith against some other manner of conceiving the relationship of God with humanity. In the case of Elijah, however, as in the case of Isaac, the Prophet does not die, but does experience terrible persecution. The intervention of God responds to the prayer in a prodigious manner. On Golgotha, the Prophet does die, and the divine intervention does not take the form of a prodigy which would defy the laws of nature. In a certain manner, Jesus seems to experience something of the prophets of Baal, which He does not self-inflict:

... So they shouted louder and gashed themselves as their custom was, with spears and swords until the blood flowed down them. Midday passed and they ranted on until the time of offering is presented but there was no voice, no answer given to them ... [1 K 18:28, ff.]

On Golgotha, the Prophet dies – but His death is what is being offered at the Hour of the Oblation – and rather than self-inflicting His own wounds, He is the One to offer the holocaust. He dies in the silence of God, in the silence of the friend of God, who Elijah is – but, His cry, His proclamation of the One Who knows why He is abandoned, brings about the end of the long-standing Temple Regime and provides the opportunity for a non-Jew to confess that Jesus Christ, Who has died on a Cross, is the Son of God. The Divine Prodigy is necessary to read in this most discreet and bold attestation [Mk 16:6].

b. The Destroyed Temple is not made by Human Hands [Mk 15:34, b]: the Torn Temple Veil is the sign of the end of the Temple – yet, at the same time in Mk's perspective, this simultaneously announces the construction of a **New Temple** not made by human hands [Mk 14:58]. Jesus is presented as its 'builder'. Here again, it seems that the tie between His anguished Great Cry: **Eloi, Eloi ...!** And the Torn Temple Veil is most profound that might some times be imagined. In other words, this experience of Jesus' death and His death in the experience of apparent divine abandonment, and His not understanding the reason for it, already provides the foundations of the New Temple, as one of this scene's first fruits.

Through His divine Great Cry: **My God, My God ...!** Jesus presents Himself as One abandoned by His God, but also as One Who does not understand the reason why, the meaning of this abandonment. These two aspects seem important for many interpreters for the matter of the New Temple. This presence of Jesus on the Cross as it is interpreted within the account, as the Presence of Jesus in the place where the One abandoned by God is held. Normally, in biblical language this would be interpreted as the real presence of God in the place where the one abandoned by God would be, as one who had been unfaithful to the Covenant, or where one not integrated within the world of the mutual Covenant might be found. However, here, Jesus' presence in this situation, in Mk's global outlook, speaks of the

presence of the Christ, the presence of the son of God, and therefore the Presence of God Himself, of Whom Jesus is both Messiah and Only Begotten Son. Furthermore, the incomprehension of Jesus regarding this abandonment is brought out clearly by His appealing **Why???** This is also redemptive of all who feel abandoned in their hour of darkness, and that through actual grace the Lord is present to all in their time of dark isolation. Therefore, Jesus' abandonment is not that of one who has personally abandoned God, or His Covenant of Mercy. Through His open side, Jesus is opening this up for all.

The Great Cry: **My God, My God...!** - expresses something more than does the sign of the torn Veil and the Centurion's Confession: that the whole world of the Temple of Jerusalem as the place of God's Presence has now been torn asunder, and God maintains Himself precisely in the place where those who may feel abandoned are. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sends forth His Spirit to bring all strangers, outcasts in that Covenant of Mercy. It is the non-believing Centurion who realizes this. The tearing asunder of the heavens [Mk 1:10; cf. Is 63:19] which provides an image at the very beginning of Mk's gospel, of the life and mission of Jesus Christ, the Most Beloved Son of God, upon Whom the Spirit had descended. All this expresses what is the most characteristic of this life and mission. The presence of God opens up the heavens, and it permeates the paths of the human sojourn of Jesus. However, this presence was not limited, on earth, to the ancient world of His contemporaries and their nation, of which the temple provided an apt symbol of choice. All this required the further manifestation of Golgotha, in the very place where there is so graphically experienced abandonment by God. God does not identify His Son with sin in the actual sense – but sends the Innocent One to experience the abandonment by God, to bring humanity in the company of the Trinity [cf. 2 Co 5:21; Ga 3:3]. With Jesus being nailed to the Cross, uttering His Great Cry from the Cross, the tearing asunder of the heavens appear as a consequence to the ending of the Temple of old: the sign would in effect be that God does indeed come to the place of most abandonment, to the sinners of all time, strangers to the Covenant of Mercy, in order to raise up in this very place, the recognition, the proclamation of the Son of God.

The 'place' is clearly marked out in the Great Cry, the death of Jesus and the Torn Temple Veil, as the sign at one and the same time of the end of the temple made by human hands, and the construction of the New Temple, not made by human hands. The old parable of the **Vineyard Workers** had already made clear in the midst of Jesus' ministry in Judea, in an implicit manner, the end of the old ways in Jerusalem [cf. Mk 12:1-12].

This parable calls to mind that the very vigilant vineyard owner appeals to the hired hands to tend his property while he is away. There comes the moment when he sends his servants to the, in order to receive his share of the harvest from the vineyard. The parable points out with some clarity the fate of these different servants of His: they suffer all kinds of mistreatment, blows, insults and even death. The owner still has one more person whom he can send, his own most-beloved son, who is to come last [*eschaton*], after he had sent all his servants, confident that the hired hands will at least respect the owner's son. On the contrary, these wicked hired

hands, seeing that this most beloved son is likewise the heir, the form the devious plan that if they put him to death, they would stand in a good position to inherit the vineyard. They kill him, and expel him outside of the vineyard. The parable then gives the owner's justifiable reaction: He will come, and will put those wicked hired hands to death, and will give the vineyard to others.

The most beloved son of the owner is put to death by the wicked hired hands – and the text identifies these as symbolizing the High Priests, the Scribes and the Elders. He puts them to death as a result of their evil ways, and hands the property over to others. This is a clear hint of the death scene of Jesus [cf. Mk 15:34-39]. The parable is a challenge to read again the episode of Jesus' death with its Great Cry of Abandonment by God, with his reference to the wicked hired hands who cast the most beloved son outside of the vineyard, outside the world of the Covenant. He sketches here God Himself, as the 'Owner' of the vineyard, a portrait which reveals the Father, anxious about His vineyard, ready to entrust to the religious leaders of Israel the care of this special vineyard. However, He ends up being deceived in His trust of them, since these religious leaders were not able to recognize the real nature of the Servants of God, and much less, the Only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God.

The God of this Parable of the homicidal hired hands is a God Who loves His son very much, Who was confident that the religious leaders of Israel would respect His Son. This is a God Who takes the side of His Beloved Son Who had been put to death and cast out of the vineyard, so the Divine Owner will put them to death, and entrust the vineyard to others. This parable, therefore, is a clear invitation to read Mk 15: 38, f. as the expression of the eminently faithful solicitude of God for His Most Beloved Son and therefore offers us important elements of interpretation of Mk 15:34 b. The Owner of the vineyard played the 'confidence-card' to the very end, in His hired hands. Nonetheless, His Son was indeed killed, and cast out of the vineyard. Not every line of the parable has a precise application, but the intention is clear – much light is shed on the death of Jesus, and the Heavenly Father's reaction.

c. Jesus' Calvary Scene and His Baptism Scene: at Jesus' Baptism, and following the passage through the waters, the heavens are torn asunder, the Spirit of God descends upon Jesus, and the Voice from the Heavens reveals Him Whom God recognizes as his Most Beloved Son, who remains forever in His favor. It is indeed the Holy Spirit of God, who from the passage through the waters casts Him out into the desert, where He would remain for 40 days, where He takes on the terrible trial of the 'Accuser'. The wild beasts, but where He is constantly protected by God.

Jesus appears, then, at the outset of Mk's Gospel as the One in favor of Whom there is realized the exact penalty of trial of the People in Exile. This People, at the heart of His experience of His being abandoned by God, no longer knowing where the One was Who had saved Him from the waters, the Shepherd of the Flock – the One Who had placed Him in His own bosom, sent into Him His own Spirit [cf. Is 63:11]. He then appealed that God might tear the heavens asunder to send out this Spirit. In all this, God shows Himself as Father, Protector, the One Who saves

from all anxiety [cf. Is 63:8]. God will show Himself as the One Who will perform the wonders as He did in the times of Moses [cf. Is 63:11].

The question arises: just what tie to these many loosely connected Biblical passages have for the evangelist. It does seem that he has woven them into a kind of tapestry that has powerfully characterized Jesus as the special object of God's loving care, in depicting Him through Jesus' Passion and Death. In His ***Eloi, Eloi...!*** The Great Cry from the Cross, Jesus seem to be in the situation of the Chosen People, the most beloved child of God, at the time of their difficult Exile and Captivity, as they experienced a clear distancing [cf. Is 63:17] from their most loving God. The sentiment comes to them that God had 'hidden His face' from them [Is 63:6], that He was irritated with them [Is 63:4], that He was under an aversion toward them and that He was battling against the very people who had been the object of His special love. Now He is enveloped in silence [Is 64:11]. On the Cross, however, Jesus does not demand that the heavens be torn asunder and that God might descend upon Him: the account shows rather a very hostile environment inhibiting any such discourse. On the Cross, His Great Cry was that Jesus did not comprehend this abandonment, in His poignant ***Why, My God...???*** The People of God at least had some inkling of the reasons of their being abandoned [cf. Is 63:10; 64:4, 6, 8].

However, Golgotha goes even further than this and injects this mysterious abandonment on the part of the Father which the Most Beloved Son does not comprehend. In other words, His Great Cry: ***Eloi, Eloi...!*** seems almost to erase what had been said earlier: ***This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased...!*** There is no clear explanation in the Gospel concerning the explanation of this divine abandonment by God, and the inability of Jesus to 'comprehend' it.

Golgotha, though, does provide a number of connections with other biblical texts which help the believer in contemplating this aspect of the mystery of our Redemption. God does tear the Temple Veil – and not the heavens – and will not abandon His Son, Who sends out His Spirit. The ultimate biblical elements here with many connections with other passages from God's Word: the signs of the Torn Temple Veil, the Confession of Faith by the non-believing centurion; the Coming of the Holy Spirit. These are the elements of our Redemption, and of the New Temple, the New Vineyard.

Summary

[1] These verses [Mk 15:33-38] can indeed bring out ever more the exceptional importance given to Jesus' Great Cry of Abandonment from the Cross in Jesus' Death account. The importance is shown also grammatically, by the repetition of His point of address; the mention of His Name; the fact that it was indeed a 'great', loud cry. There is also the precise indication of the moment of Jesus' death, and the Cry is also presented in two languages. Despite all this, the cry is misunderstood by the by-standers. With all this insistence and clarification, it seems quite clear that Mk desires in some way to place at the center of his Crucifixion account this chosen instant for the revelation of Jesus' identity – coupled as well with His identification of

His Heavenly Father as His God. Jesus is clearly, for Mk, the Christ, and the Son of God.

[2] Along with these pairs, there is also emphasized by Mk the two signs: one of the **Darkness at Mid-day** – and the **Torn Temple Veil**. [vv. 33 & 38]. The position of these two verses seems to provide its own language in situating the Death of Jesus as an Act of God, as an event which, despite all appearances, cannot be confused in the unfolding of events of the very human life He conducted. Golgotha seems to many interpreters, by its very structuring, to be connected as well with the **Transfiguration** and **Baptism** of Jesus.

[3] The three hours of Darkness at mid-day express moreover, in imagery, this experience of the anguished cry of abandonment and is suggestive of the dying moment of Jesus. Like the Darkness, the Great Cry of Abandonment, His death – all serve as the vehicle to express isolation, the incapacity of being in connection with anything else, profound fear, anguish – all of which result from His weakness, and all of these, aggravate it. The Darkness serves as an apt symbol in the Great Cry from the Cross: **Why, o Lord??!** Recognized as a sign accompanying this **Act of God**, this **Day of Yahweh**, in which God manifests His absolute dominion over all aspects of creation, even those ‘man-made’. Golgotha provides the signs revealing the Divine Lordship over both creation and history. While the Night can impose limitations on the created universe, taking visibility from human eyes, it helps the reader here to understand the depths of the Great Cry from the Cross – this is the Death of the Most Beloved, Only Begotten Son of God, expressed in this Great Cry from the Cross.

[4] This **Cry from the Cross, associated with the ‘night’ of darkness ad mid-day**, seems to limit human comprehension on many levels/ It intensifies the Great Cry of Abandonment, the impotence afflicting the Lord. It is verbalized by **My God, My God...!** The **Darkness** provides the ‘cover’, the language [*nox, illuminatio mea...!*] of the activity of God in the **Exodus Desert**, with its 9th **Plague** especially. It provides at one and the same time, a way of escape for the People of God, and a cause of fear for its enemies. Like the Darkness, the Great Cry from the Cross speaks of Judgment, of abandonment by God – but, also of the solicitude, salvation on the part of God alone. It reveals the Death of Jesus as the assumption of the status of the First-Born of the Egyptians also put to death in one of the Desert Plagues. It is a sign of the Living God still able to intervene, with His Gift of Life. He can provide that freedom for the One Who is incarnate in obedience to Him, in His adherence to His Heavenly Father, by commending His Spirit into His loving hands.

[5] The Torn Temple Veil provides an image in which the Great Cry of Abandonment and Jesus; death conveys further that the world, of which the Temple is the symbol, is now over-turned. The New Temple is being constructed. At the outset of Mk’s Gospel, Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, the Son of God – in dying He prays: **Eloi, Eloi...** This is also a strong profession of God’s existence, His abiding presence in the darkness of trial and suffering. The entire former system of life around the Temple is being abandoned by God – He will be present in the New

Temple of God. By means of the Torn Temple Veil, the Great Cry of Abandonment and Jesus' Death all speak of the end of the world, and of the Temple, and of all that was once obligatory for an encounter with God. From the Crucifixion onward, the Heavens have been torn asunder in order to express the abiding presence of the Spirit of God coming to us through Jesus from the Father. These signs are read as bearing through the tearing asunder of the Temple Veil – as the ultimate announcement of the coming of the Spirit of Yahweh which allows the Confession of Faith as the Son of God – coming to us on the lips of a non-believer, a Roman Centurion – one of the early members of the New Temple.



7. Theological reflections

- [A] The Mystery of Jesus' Filial Obedience
- [B] The Mystery of Jesus' Abandonment: To/ By the Father
- [C] The Mystery of Jesus' *Constitutional Filiation*



[A] The Mystery of Jesus' Filial Obedience¹⁰⁶

[1] There seems to be an intimate bond between the **total loving obedience** of Jesus Christ to His Father and His **Divine Filiation**. Through Jesus' obedience to the Will of God, Jesus appears truly to be the **Suffering Servant of Yahweh**. The thought comes almost spontaneously to mind what a simple matter it was for the NT writers to apply so often the Canticles of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah to be applied to Jesus, particularly the final one [cf. Is 53]. This is used throughout the NT to describe the Passion of Jesus, and this is particularly so in the readings for Holy Week. However, there should not be lost from sight that this same **loving obedience** of Jesus manifests also its **unique filial aspect which** can only be explained through the faith in His unique relationship to His Heavenly Father. In theology, this, of course, is of fundamental importance, not only in the area of Soteriology, but also for Christology. This brings us deeply within the central mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, where personality is revealed and established through Mission. Jesus' obedience introduces us into the Mystery of His Person – therefore, justly do authors refer to the **mystery of Jesus' obedience**.

[2] There is just no way that the rather 'thorough coverage' of Jesus; Obedience could ever have been 'invented' by the NT writers. The entire Apostolic Church venerated Jesus Christ as its Risen Lord. This can only be attributed to a historical fact of reality, that has been divinely transmitted to us through the Gospels and NT writings. The ultimate foundation that serves as the spring-board, or the Font of this Filial Obedience of the Incarnate Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity is much alluded to by St. John, who has been followed by so many of the early Church Fathers and writers. They unanimously concur that the ultimate foundation of all this finds its ultimate origin in the Divine Filiation of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰⁶ de la Potterie, *La preghiera di Gesù*, o.c., pp. 103-112.

[3] It is especially Jn who even more than the other NT writers emphasizes both **Jesus' total obedience expressing His love for His Father**, as will as his **intimate Filial Relationship with Him**. There may be noted in Jn testimonies almost without number in so many chapters of his 4th Gospel in which these two aspects of the one mystery are so much in the fore. When this 4th Gospel speaks of Jesus' obedience, very often the inspired author uses the words 'Father' and 'Son.' The obedience that is described here is not so much that of a creature before His Creator, or of a Servant in subservience to his Master – rather, this comes across over and over again as the love expressed by obedience of the Only Begotten, and Most Beloved Son of God for His Heavenly Father. **To obey** is the expression of His Person, of His unique relationship with His Father. That which Jesus **IS**, becomes known to us by what He **DOES**: He **IS** the Only Begotten, the Most Beloved, Son of the Father – and this is revealed by His loving obedience. This is what He **DOES**: He **is** the **Obedient Son**.

[4] Jesus declares His unique obedience at the end of His statements regarding the Power of the Son:

... I tell you most solemnly, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does, the Son does, too. For the Father loves the Son and shows Himself everything He does Himself, and He will show Him even greater things than these, works that will astonish you...
[Jn 5:19, f.]

The final statement that Jesus makes in His public life, prior to His Priestly Fare of Farewell., serve as a kind of Conclusion to the 'Gospel of Signs' in Jn:

... For what I have spoken does not come from Myself; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak, was commanded by the Father Who sent Me, and I know that His commands mean eternal life. And therefore, what the father has told Me, is what I speak... [Jn 12:4, f.].

[5] To be able to understand more profoundly in what measure Jesus' loving obedience is the expression of His Unique Filiation there are further statements of Jesus that draw the contemplation of the Faithful. **The entire Mission of Jesus is presented as one prolonged act of His loving Obedience** for His Father. In His Priestly Prayer of Farewell, Philip asks him somewhat naively: *Lord, show us the Father!* - and Jesus responds:

... to have seen Me is to have seen the Father, so, how can you say: 'Let us see the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from Myself; it is the Father living in Me, who is doing this work... [Jn 14: 9, f.].

This is a typically Johannine verse: there is a subtle play on Greek synonyms here, with significant substitutions of one term for another. As regards His own words, Jesus maintains: ***I do not speak as from Myself...*** And the logical continuation would seem to demand: *It is the Father Who speaks in Me these words...!* However, Jesus gives an unexpected continuation: ***... the Father living in Me is doing this***

work...! We might hazard an informed guess here what is the reason for this surprising shift in language in the development of this sublime thought. It wants to bring out that the **work** of the Father consists in **being revealed in the Son's words**. Then, on the other hand, these very words and work of the Father also reveal to the believer much that is important about Jesus. The reason for this, of course, is: **the Father is in Me...!** - and the sublime reason for this is that between Them there is a **unique relationship** of Father and Son. Only in this manner can the mysterious words of Jesus to Philip [**Whoever has seen Me, has seen the Father...**] – which are among the most significant of the entire 4th Gospel - receive its full and sublime meaning.

[6] It is evident from all this that it does not suffice to look upon Jesus merely with one's bodily eyes in order to **see** the Father. This view is only possible for a 'gaze' that comes in contemplation – as Mary treasuring these things in her heart. [cf. Lk 2:19, 51]. This is that capacity to see beyond appearances, exteriors: in pondering the words and deeds expressed through the human nature of Jesus Christ, through contemplative faith one is enabled to penetrate into His interior reality, into the mystery of the Son Who is present in Him. Whoever looks upon Jesus in this manner, who recognizes in this man the Only-Begotten Son, is thus able to 'see' His loving Father. The presence and the activity within Him of the Heavenly Father explain why Jesus does not speak of Himself, nor about Himself, but that He **obeys** the Father in the work of revelation, redemption. The profound motive for these words is the father Who works through Him.

[7] In the Patristic literature as well the theme of Jesus' Filial Obedience often comes to the fore, as intrinsically tied in with His Divine Origin. The Fathers of the Church sought not only to comment for the faithful on the parenetic and spiritual levels this mystery, but also to reflect on the inner mystery of the Person of Jesus Christ, Who stands behind, within His conduct and responses. Of the many available texts for Patristic reflection, just a few will be noted here:

- **Maximus the Confessor:** his emphasis in theological research was on showing that Jesus' **fiat** in the Agony of Gethsemane there is revealed that most sublime act of His human freedom and that this fully human act was at the same time that of the Divine Son of God. The obedience of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane was fully human according to the essential reality of His Human Will – in this, Jesus was like other human beings. However, He exercised this obedience in a fully **Personal manner**, in a perfect accord of His Will with that of His Heavenly Father, an accord which was but the expression of His **Filial basic attitude**. There is no denying that Maximus' language is difficult and abstract. This had to be in the times that he lived. However, there needs also to be admired the precision and the depth of his grasp of the language of mystery: Jesus Christ, in His human nature, in His Prayer in Gethsemane, reveals Himself to be perfectly submitted to God's Will. He is this in His fundamental **Filial Attitude** towards the One Whom in His Prayer He calls: **Abba! Father** [Mk 14:36]. These considerations of Maximus can be extended then to Jesus' entire earthly existence; they permeate the entire economy of the Incarnation. Jesus' whole life on earth becomes 'the human story of the Divine Person. This allows the

praying believer to discern in all this an **essential aspect** of the human consciousness of Jesus Christ: the entire specific, personal reality of the Son is realized and manifested in union with the existence, the heart and the soul of the man, Jesus Christ.

- **Cyril of Alexandria**: the theme of Jesus' Filial Obedience also comes to the fore here. In his Commentary on Jn, one of the great Greek Commentators on the 4th Gospel, on reaching Jn 5:19: ***the Son of Himself can do nothing, only that which He sees the Father doing...*** - the learned Alexandrian offers this paraphrasing of the text: *In all, I do His work, for the very fact that I exist through Him.* Since Jesus is generated from the Father for all eternity, all of His human actions are the expression of that which the father does. The man Jesus speaks and acts as the Son of the Heavenly Father. His Filiation – from the Father, eternally within the Trinity – is the key that permits the faithful to understand that He, in His humanity, perfectly fulfills that which the Father states.

- **Hilary of Poitiers**: as an early representative from the Latin World, the Bishop of Poitiers speaks out in the era of Arianism afflicting the Church. Although Jesus possesses the same substance as the father, the Son is **subjected, submitted** to the Father as to the One Who generates Him. **To generate** is not understood in the general sense of a Creator's activity, but in the specific and proper sense of the eternal Principle: the Father **generates the Son eternally**. In this sense, it can be stated that within the Trinitarian Life, the **eternal giving pertains** to the Father, and the **eternal receiving** is a characteristic of the Son. Therefore, Jesus could state in the Gospel:... ***the Father is greater than I... !*** [cf. Jn 14:28]. This verse for a long time was much discussed among the Fathers. According to the better interpretations of antiquity, this should be understood as follows: the **minor** being of the Divine Son does not only pertain to Jesus Christ in His human nature related to God [as this is already obvious, as not needing any particular emphasis for a committed believer] – but this **minority** is also verified within God Himself through Jesus Christ in His quality as Divine Son, co-eternal, con-substantial, co-equal, from all eternity. Nonetheless, in his **Filiation**, He is **less** than the Father, because the Divine Son **owes** His filial origin to the Father.

[8] **St. Thomas Aquinas**: this is the explanation of the Angelic Doctor¹⁰⁷ in his reference to the **Prayer of Jesus**:

...Christ wished to pray to His Father in order to give us an **example** of praying; and also to **show that His Father is the author** both of His eternal procession in the Divine Nature, and of all the good that He possesses in the human nature...

Here there may be discovered the ultimate meaning of Jesus' Prayer, in so far as He is indeed the fulfillment of the prophecy of the **Servant of God** – when Jesus expressed in His prayer **His total obedience** and **complete abandonment to the Father**, in the same time He is revealed as the Father's Only Begotten Son.

¹⁰⁷ III, q. 21, a. 3, resp.

[9] **Modern Theologians:** so many modern scholars have noted this sublime aspect both of the Prayer of Jesus and **His ontological filial constitution:**

- **Cardinal Newman:**¹⁰⁸ expresses the same ideas as the Fathers, whose careful scholar he was, and the English Prelate did this in a most insightful manner. He treats in particular the dialectic of Jesus' **being the Servant**, by beginning with the mystery of the **immanent Trinity** and eventually comes to Jesus' entire earthly sojourn. He wrote: obedience pertains to the **Servant**, while the *assent*, the cooperation are more the characteristics of a **Son**. In the eternal Union within God, there is no difference in His Willing and Acting between the Father and the Son: was there was the life of the Father, so also the life of the Son, and the glory of the Father was also the glory of the son- thus, the Son is the very Word of the Father and the Wisdom of the Father, His Power substantially equal to Him in everything – and yet, He is distinct from Him. However, in the time of His earthy sojourn, when He humbled Himself to take on **the form of a Servant**, - taking upon Himself distinct intellect and will and activity, such as tiredness and suffering, which are the characteristics of a creature: that which earlier had been simple **cooperation** becomes a clear **obedience**. This is the sense of these words: **since He was Son, He learned obedience**. He took upon Himself the inferior nature and in and through this, He always sought to be in conformity with the will which is more sublime and more perfect. It is somewhat surprising to see to what point Cardinal Newman, so full of the spirit of the Fathers, came very close in so many of his expressions in this matter to those of Maximus the Confessor. However, there is this clear difference: Newman considered the **cooperation** as the characteristic of a son [with regard to Christ it is a matter of the life of the son of God] – whereas Maximus speaks in reference to Jesus in His condition as **servant**. In Gethsemane, Jesus has manifested a 'perfect accord' between His will and the divine will.

- **Romano Guardini:** also has expressed himself along these lines. This basic attitude of Jesus confers the particular sense of His existence. When the believer takes the time to examine the many expressions of Jesus with regard to His Father's Will and His relationship with this, it is clearly seen that His obedience to His Will comes to much in accord with it, that Jesus' human will seems to be identified with the Divine Will.

- **Hans urs von Balthasar:** thus formulates this idea: in the consciousness of His Mission, for Jesus there is more in having received a determined divine charge. In His intimate self an identity with this charge. This is the Source of the authentic conception of His Person, which in Christology is a concept that is primarily theological. Thus, Jesus is identical with His Personal Mission, in which there is present His Divine Filiation – He is the First-Born.

¹⁰⁸ cf. especially the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. III. London, 'The Humiliation of the Eternal Son.' Anglican Sermons.

- **J. Guillet**: in Jesus, His human obedience, with all that there is of obscurity and external submission implied in this, is that which translates and reveals fully the **immediate dependence** of the Son, Who lives in the Father's presence, and receives from Him all His existence. His obedience as man, in its forms that are humanly more incomprehensible, were for Jesus the predestined means to reveal His most cherished secret: His Filial Love for His Father.

- **Cardinal W. Kasper**: in His radical obedience, Jesus is the radical originality from God and the radical reference toward Him. He is nothing of Himself, but is all from and for God. He is therefore the empty form, the open space for the love of God which is communicated and through Him. The donation of Jesus to His Father presupposes, naturally, the communication of the Father to him. The successive Christology developing from His Filiation is nothing other than the interpretation and the translation of all that is found hidden in the filial obedience and donation of Jesus Christ. That which Jesus lived ontologically prior to Easter comes then to be expressed ontologically in the post-paschal period.



Summary

This discussion centers on a most sublime paradox of the Mystery of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, there is **His perfect human obedience toward His Father**, and His **Divine Filiation**. The 4th Gospel, so many of the Fathers of the Church and outstanding modern authors have placed in evidence that the first aspect of this paradox is the explicit formulation of the second, and is rooted in it. This leads to the discovery of an important aspect, and without doubt, the most fundamental, of the human consciousness of Jesus Christ: He lived as a man Who gave Himself completely, and Who is identified with His supernatural Mission, and One Who has abandoned Himself totally into the Father's hands. Here there is uncovered the most profound reality of His Being: He lives completely as the Son of the Father and is always directed toward Him. The Early Christians came to understand that precisely in this aspect He has revealed Himself to be the Heavenly Father's Only Begotten and Most Beloved Son. It is this marvelous insight that modern Christology has unearthed and developed.



**[B] THE ABANDONMENT IN/ OF JESUS CHRIST
TO THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE/ IMMANENT GOD¹⁰⁹**

Presentation:

[1] The developments of contemporary Catholic theology, deeply rooted in the tradition of the Catholic Church, open up new horizons concerning the abandonment of the Christian believer in an through the act of faith - ***obsequium intellectus et voluntatis*** - to Jesus Christ, in union with His abandonment as the Son of Man.

[2] Along with the Magisterium, the two Vatican Councils – together with the ecumenical dialogue and the exchanges with Lutherans – along with ascetical and mystical theology and its developments, with the increase of understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas: the end of any discussion of prayer, beginning always with the Passion of the Lord, the committed believer is orientated toward an act of **Holy Abandonment**, offered to the Most Blessed Trinity, indwelling within the most intimate depths of the faithful soul. Holy Abandonment that is mediated by Jesus Christ is not simply some kind of connection a the distant God, but precisely binds us immediately to the transcendent but much present Creator Who works this out within us. We are thus abandoned to the God both three and one, Who promises Himself to us in us, inviting us to promise Him seriously our confidence and trust. These affirmations need to be contemplated.



1. The Jesuit theologian, Karl Rahner, insisted much on the One and Triune God as both incomprehensible and yet, always near. The affirmation of the ***Incomprehensibility of God*** is one of the ‘constants’ of Christian theology, perhaps since the times of St. John Chrysostom. It is one of the corner-stones in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas¹¹⁰ and a view that impressed the great Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross¹¹¹ in a most profound manner.

The horizon of an absolute transcendence of freedom which while remaining that which does not allow itself to be dominated, reigns supremely as the freedom of love. This horizon is precisely and uniquely that which theologians refer to as ***sacred*** in the original and strict sense of the word. The simple reason for this is that our Loving God is beyond all names and is One Who makes use of us and Who calls out to us in our finitude, and thus is known to be termed in some manner, in the broad realm of the ***sacred***. Therefore, the Mysterious God reigns in transcendence, under the manner of distance, of infinite power who makes use of creatures without disposing of them, or casting them away. This is indeed what believers are moved to refer to as a ***sacred Mystery***. Even in the beatific vision, when we see Him as He is, God remains the ***Incomprehensible***. The knowledge of the incomprehensible

¹⁰⁹ Bertrand de Margerie, SJ, *L'abandon a' Dieu. Histoire doctrinale. Croire et Savoir*. Paris: Tequi 1996, pp. 267-286.

¹¹⁰ I, q. 12, a. 7 ad 1 um.

¹¹¹ *Spiritual Canticle*. VII, 4 & 9.

character of God makes up necessarily part of the positive characteristics of the intuitive knowledge of God. To anyone who 'sees', the incomprehensibility of God is given as **the content of the vision of Him** – and by the same fact, as **the beatitude of one's love for Him**. For the one who is joined to Him, who practices Holy Abandonment toward Him, without any anguish, lucidly and lovingly, the mystery is **unique peace**.

In other terms, the God Who decides the believer's destiny, the God to Whom each abandon his/her temporal and eternal welfare, is the infinite and incomprehensible God. The fact is the all human knowledge of Him remains finite, and will never be able to bridge the gap with His infinite Being. Revelation teaches that this infinite God has developed a plan for each one – as not a sparrow falls from the sky without His knowing of it. This plan of eternal destiny has been developed out of His infinite love. This entire mystery of each person's eternal lot surpasses human intelligence of necessity, even in the after-world, in the very bosom of the face to face eternal contact which faith leads the believer to hope for, will always be beyond human comprehension. The predestination that is being worked out in the life of each one will always transcend human grasp, and faith asks each to rejoice in being eternally abandoned to the loving and merciful Creator.

This divine incomprehensibility casts a vivid light on this act of Holy Abandonment. The God to Whom faith leads the follower of Jesus Christ to develop this intensifying attitude of Holy Abandonment is not beyond some understanding. Vatican I [DS 3001 (DS 800)] proclaims God's incomprehensibility and His infinity also makes clear, independence on St. Paul [Rm 1] that God can be known beginning from this created universe [DS 3004]. However, it still remains true that the actual determinations regarding His love on each and every person totally surpass each human finite reason. And this remains true eternally, even face to face with His love. What is always clear is each believer's insurmountable finitude, and the abject unworthiness of us all.

As a result, it is not only in this world that this holds true, but also in the later life to which every believer is called by vocation to be abandoned to His Divine Wisdom. It will always be the Loving God Who plans out the temporal and eternal destiny of each person in an absolute manner. The eternal beatitude held in store for each is inseparable from the adoring vision of His unfathomable plan over each. As a result the voluntary act of Holy Abandonment, to which each believer is destined [***Thy will be done!***], while it lovingly embraces in the human response of love those limits established by Divine Wisdom to our grasp of His Salvific Plan, will always be included in that Beatitude toward which all the faithful are being called.

The Holy Abandonment to which each is destined is also in the teaching of Vatican II, included in that act of faith [***obsequium*** - DV 5] of each one accepting Divine Revelation, walking toward the face to face eternal and beatific vision: *to the God Who reveals there is asked that obedience of the faith by each human being commits him/herself totally and freely to God!* Holy Abandonment, therefore, in the eyes of Vatican II, is inherent to the Act of Faith, and brings with it confidence in

loving God, the merciful Creator. The act of Holy Abandonment, therefore, is included in the act of **intelligence**, manifesting **confidence** in the Omnipotence of the Creator. This merciful power of God is at the origin of all created being and there is asked through grace an act of the will, stimulating this confidence and trust in God. Thus synthesized, the superior faculties of the human mind and heart make the act of submission towards the incomprehensible God. **As an act of intelligence**, the believing act of Holy Abandonment presupposes the human expression exercised with regard to God. Here in this life on earth the human mind does not have immediate experience of the Divine being that can be called upon through the employment of human concepts: the NT revelation supposes that the human being has acquired through personal experience, that reflection on the content of God's Word, and those concepts furnished by the language of human society. There is needed the full series of notions, such as *father, son, breath, humanity, virgin*, and so many more. From the perspective of human intelligence, the act of holy abandonment is mediated.

From the perspective of the human will, however, the act of Holy Abandonment places one in the immediate relationship of love with the last end, the Supreme Good. If the act of freedom is conditioned by the act of intelligence, and in this sense, is mediated by it, it nonetheless bears immediately on its object, which is at the same time its final end. Always keeping in mind the intermediary purposes, it immediately ties in immediately with the sole and ultimate end which orientates this act of human freedom toward it. The act of the will is taken in what is called an *ecstatic* manner on the reality itself, exterior to itself, since the act of knowledge does not hinder the immediate relationship of the will with its object.¹¹² **The immediate love for God mediates the love for neighbor.** Holy Abandonment to God arouses abandonment toward one's neighbor, and **even toward the Church**, the Head of which is divine and its members are human.

The mystery of the incomprehensible and infinite God is the supreme act of Holy Abandonment. At the same time its author casts light on the ecumenical bearing of this act which embraces heaven and earth. Catholics and Protestants together rejoice in abandoning themselves and mutually to God's Providence, incomprehensibly loving those whom it assembles in a faith, that is particularly common and a common hope [cf. Ep 4:4]. This agreement has been realized in the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue: All of our hope for justification and salvation rests on Jesus Christ and on His Gospel which makes us come to know the Good News of the merciful action of God in the Christ. We place our absolute confidence in nothing other than the promises of God and His work of salvation in Jesus Christ. This excludes absolute confidence in our own faith, our own virtues and our own merits, even if we come to know the work of God by grace alone. In brief, the hope of salvation and the confidence that we have are in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and repose in the last analysis, on the unique intervention of God in Jesus Christ.

¹¹² St. Thomas Aquinas. II-II, q. 27, a. 4.

The Catholic, while expressing full hope in God, with the beautiful *moral* certitude of hope, for the grace of persevering in faith, of growing in the virtues and the merits flowing from the merits of Jesus Christ, recognizes with the Council of Trent [DS 1540, 1541] that no one – other than through a private revelation - can ever have the absolute certitude of faith, of receiving the grace of this final perseverance, including the coincidence between the hour of each one's final act of freedom in the instant of death, and this great and supreme gift of God.

Certainly – and the authors of the joint Catholic-Lutheran agreement - this texts allows to subsist those disagreements between Catholics and Protestants on a number of points in the area of Justification. It is clear, for example, that the faith, in the Catholic view, includes as Jn makes known, with the confidence in God Who speaks, the belief of those truths which He word communicates to us and which pertains to the Church alone to define.

However, the insistence in this agreement on the fact that this confidence in salvation has to rest completely on God expresses a central concern of the Lutheran teaching, without excluding the traditional Catholic position according to which the transformation of sinners, a work of grace, is a necessary preparation for final salvation. In brief, the ecumenical agreement bears on the nature of the confidence, or assurance of salvation – put in other words, it is based on a fundamental aspect of Holy Abandonment. There can be no faith in conformity to the Gospel, no hope of eternal salvation, no love for God as Savior without remitting this salvation into the hands of God in an act of Holy Abandonment. Beyond all the remaining differences, Catholics and Protestants are in mind agreement in stating with the Council of Trent that in the first place it is God Who justifies the impious by His grace through Redemption which is in Christ Jesus [cf. Rm 3:24] [DS 1526]. Even though the differences still remaining considerable in the Catholic and Lutheran understanding of the abandonment of salvation to the Saving God, these do not suppress the reality already present of a fundamental communion in the personal and common abandonment of the destiny of each one to the Savior God, to His incomprehensible love for humanity in its entirety and for each one of its members.

In abandoning to the Savior God the mystery of personal salvation and that of all others, the baptized members of the different ecclesial communions abandon to Him also their progressive coming together in the one Flock of Jesus Christ: thus in a recent French catechism for adults, the Bishops bring out this fact: the Christian faith knows that the goodness of the Heavenly Father envelops the entire destiny of her children. This faith draws also on an attitude of strengthened confidence and loving abandonment, which does not fail to make its influence felt in some situations. Seek first of all the reign of God and His justice, and all else –[foods and clothing] will be given to you! [Mt 6:25-33]. Hope is that dynamism of the faith, projected toward the future. It renders confident in the fidelity of God to activate His promises of life. Faith thus culminates in the total abandonment to the Father Who is able to overturn the most desperate situations. Hoping against all hope, Abraham believed and he thus has become the father of a great number of people [Rm 4: 17, f.].

These texts of the French Catechism for Adults show that holy abandonment is a light in the persistent darkness. It presupposes faith, the obscure certitude in the non-vision in which is believed. It contains hope, confident waiting and the trusting desire of eternal life, transfiguring with its luminous rays the horizons of the earthly life. It is love of the will presented to the provident God. When it truly penetrates the souls of the baptized members of the different ecclesial communities, it orientates them together in their reciprocal union to the bosom of the Reign of God begun here below and culminating after death in the Reign of Heaven consummated in perfect and mutual lucidity.¹¹³

Abandonment to the providence of the incomprehensible God is in an inseparable manner the condition of eternal salvation for each human being and the great lever lifting human beings upward toward the horizon of their mutual reconciliation here on earth [LG 5], all the while thrusting the Christian communities toward the re-composition of their unity.

From this point in time on, it appears that in the bosom of each Christian confession, as on the occasion of ecumenical meetings, the holy abandonment to the Divine Will, always mysterious and of which all the particular and actual plans are at each instant held and transfigured by the care of recapitulating everything in Jesus Christ, is the supreme means of assembling in one all the brothers and sisters still separated, but already bound together by the common quest for this lovable and loving will. The intimate bond between the attitude of abandonment to the reconciling Providence and the mysterious incomprehensibility of His intervening Will, when one adores the most holy and permitting Will of God regarding our personal sins, those of others, and notably on the sins of the leaders of our ecclesial communities in the bosom of present history.

Truly, one can up to a certain point comprehend the immediate causes, as well as those that are more distant and ultimate, whether these be efficient or deficient, or final, of the permissive will of God. But, it remains true that no human being can, due to the finitude of human intelligence, grasp in all its width and depth the Plan of Infinite Wisdom regarding one's own life, on that of others, or on the destiny of the Church. There is, therefore, matter for the exercise of Holy Abandonment in all cases. This Abandonment implies each time the two-fold recognition of human limitations, both personal and collective, before the plan of the infinitely wise and powerful of the Word, returning to the Father in the Spiration of the Holy Spirit, of the Incarnate Word, abandoning Himself to the Father in thus meriting the unifying and reconciling acts of Holy Abandonment.

2. Jesus Christ, on His Cross, is the Mediator and the Source of Holy Abandonment to the Incomprehensible God: on several occasions, on working out these reflections, the great theologians of Holy Abandonment bring forward the aspect of the Infant Christ – and above all the agonizing and crucified Lord. He is presented as the source, its Meritorious and Exemplary Cause, the Efficient and Final

¹¹³ St. Augustine, *Commentary on Ps 44*.

Cause, of all our acts of Holy Abandonment. In other words, Jesus Christ wills to work out in us and for us the attitude of being abandoned to the Father, under the Breath of the Holy Spirit.

This Abandonment expressed by Jesus Christ to His Father is exercised already on the level of His immediate human knowledge of the incomprehensible Salvific Will of the Father regarding His own death with a view to the salvation of the human race:

... this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of His Person [DS 475]. The human nature of God's Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God. Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God has of His Father [cf. Mk 14:36; Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 8:55, etc.]. The Son in His human knowledge also showed the divine penetration He had into the secret thoughts of human hearts [cf. Mk 2; 8; Jn 2; 25; 6:61, ff.] [CCC # 473]...

This transcendent and infinite Will surpasses – as far as its intelligibility is concerned - the limits of the finite intelligence of Jesus in His human nature. As the Doctors of the Church understood this, such as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross, in the bosom of the face-to-face Beatific Vision, Jesus could not exhaust, or know in an exhaustive manner the divine Being, nor its Plan for the world. In the high point of His soul, elevated from here below, even from the very first instant of His earthly existence [Pius XII - DS 3812], in the face-to-face vision, the Man Jesus abandoned Himself in His humanity to the Mystery [which surpassed Him] of the Universal Salvific Will of the Father. He is thus the Most Perfect Model possible of our abandonment to the incomprehensible and loving Will of God which saves us by inspiring in us the will to be saved.

However, the will which accompanies the Beatific Vision is **not meritorious**. It is not *this* love of Christ for His Father which has saved us, even though He had seen our salvation face-to-face. On the contrary, **it is that love flowing from His infused knowledge of the Father and of humanity which has merited our salvation.**

By His infused lights received immediately from His Father without the prior exercise of His senses and of His human reason, Jesus, the prophet of His own future Resurrection, recognized therein in advance the remunerating will of the Father with regard to His work of justice [cf. Rm 5:18, f.]. He saw from the very beginning [cf. Heb 10: 5, ff.] of His human existence the response of the Father to the desolate question which He posits on the Cross in the name of the entire human race [CCC # 603]: ***My God, My God, why have You abandoned me...?*** – and He knows that this response consists in this: *in giving you the power to give your life for the life of the world, as a consequence I have given you the power to take it up again so that in You all human beings might have life in abundance...* [cf. Jn 17:18; 10:10].

Looked at in the light of the Unique Person and the two natures of the Only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God, our abandonment manifests itself as Christological. It is the abandonment to the Father of His adoptive children in and by

the Only Begotten Son. This enables us to share in the Abandonment of the Son by the Father and in the abandonment of the Son, abandoned to His Father. The Divine Son, without any complaint or revolt, communicates to human beings in His Cry of Dereliction [Mk 15:34] His own suffering in the face of the corporal and experienced abandonment of the Father. He asks us thus to console Him [Ps 68]. And to fortify Him [Lk 23:43]. He makes us understand [Lk 23:46; cf. Ps 31:6] His response to the Father's abandonment in His own Cry of Holy Abandonment to His Father: ***Father, into Your hands, I commend My spirit ...!***

We participate in the Son's abandonment by the Father on the corporal plan at the hour of His death, but we differ from the Son, obeying unto death in a perpetual accomplishment of the Father's good pleasure [cf. Ph 2:8; Jn 8:29]. we can say with the Son, using the words of the Psalmist: 'if it could be by a just judgment that You abandon me for a little while, so that I might come to understand my own weakness and that I might learn more to entrust myself in you and to confide in You, at least do not abandon me totally, nor forever.'

In this terrestrial pilgrimage, as David knew all so well, there is no one who may not for a time have the experience of a distancing of grace – there is hardly anyone who does not experience an abandonment, giving in, to venial sin, even though not mortal. All can - in the image of the Savior – day to the Father, without complaint nor rebellion: ***My God, My God, why have You abandoned me ...?*** - at the moment of death and to add that which Jesus could not say, and never did say: 'as I have abandoned myself to sin!' And the Father responds: 'I have abandoned you for a while in order to save you spiritually and eternally, I have handed you over to death in order to raise you up on the last day.' As I have already given up My Only Begotten Son to death in order to glorify Him and in raising Him up on the third day, in order to give Him the possibility of meriting by his Death and Glorious Resurrection. Jesus' [and our!] response is: ***Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit...!***

This is the two-fold mystery of Christ's abandonment by the Father – as well as the abandonment of Christ to His Father, as the ultimate key of understanding something of the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation. It has been said: we conceive in the present one of the principle reasons of the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ, the divine and the human. This reason had been to place His soul in the state of bearing this frightful abandonment, and of being elevated beyond it all by His love, in choosing to abandon Himself to His Father. This would have been an absolutely unsustainable burden for a simple creature, even though perfect, even though elevated by special grace, as the believer rightly supposes, such as the Blessed Virgin Mary was. An abandonment this extreme would demand a grace of the caliber of the Grace of the Hypostatic Union - and even with this, the son of Man succumbed!

We might further conceive how, for this only suffering accepted and endured unto death, Jesus Christ fully satisfied the Divine Justice – how by this God has been supremely glorified: His glory is to be loved for Himself with a love that is pure,

generous, lacking in self-centeredness. This is impossible other than the infinite love that God has of Himself and of which there had been a comparable reality in that love by which Jesus Christ chose to abandon Himself to His Father. It is through this that original sin and all actual sins have been perfectly expiated. The injury which God received from all this is less offensive in itself than the reparation achieved through Jesus' Love. His submission has far surpassed our dismal human rebellion. His willing self-emptying far surpasses our pride, and His goodness simply overwhelms our malice. In all this, He has merited heaven for us and the graces that lead there and this is what He has offered to God in the name of the human race, which was a price which God simply 'could not refuse' the eternal happiness. There would have been no way to offer Him a greater oblation [cf. Rm 5:15] – the gift of the Second Adam far outweighed the fall of the First Adam!

Some theologians, in pondering these matters, have over-estimated the wrath of God. Nonetheless, it is commonly believed that abandonment is the key which opens up to us a better understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ and of His redemptive coming: the Only Begotten son of God became Incarnate in order to abandon Himself to His Father and in order to save us in this matter, by offering us, by His example and by His grace, the sheer possibility of abandoning ourselves in or turn. It is necessary to be clear on this: if God has chosen to be glorified in us for all eternity, He treat in a manner approaching that in which He treated His own Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son. After having tested us in diverse trials, in order to prepare us for a great act of pure love, of which are enabled to entertain no idea at all prior to experiencing it, He will prepare us to abandon ourselves and to hand ourselves over to our own misery, corruption, temptations, to the appearances of sin, allowing us to believe that we are culpable and that we do merit the fearsome chastisement which is due to it all. At the same time, He inspires us to abandon ourselves out of love to His Justice.

We know that in the infinitely simple reality of God, His justice is identical to His Mercy, His justice is merciful. St. Therese of Lisieux helps us to understand better this identity which comes to transfigure our acts of abandonment. God 'has' to prepare us to be able to abandon ourselves so that we might be able to abandon ourselves fully to Him. A good exercise will be: that when we feel we have to cry out: ***My God, My God, why have You abandoned me...?*** - we might also practice at the same time praying Christ's other declaration: ***Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit...!***

Nonetheless, it is necessary to emphasize an essential difference between the mediating abandonment of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and that Holy Abandonment mediated by Him for Christians: the abandonment of Jesus Christ is one of pure love, penetrating His trust and His fidelity with regard to His Heavenly Father. His abandonment is deprived of all accompaniment of Faith, since Christ did not believe that He was the only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God – He **knew** that He was, and He **saw** it in his beatifying vision¹¹⁴ in His human intelligence. He knew it as well,

¹¹⁴ cf. English *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas - Alphabetical Index: ***CHRIST [Faith] -FAITH [Blessed have no F.]***

of course, in His divine nature in His unique Divine Person. He 'hopes' for the beatitude of His own Body, destined for the resurrection, but not in His soul, which already **sees** the Father and has no need – with total difference from human beings – of being 'saved.' However, His physical and mental Passion has merited for us an abandonment full of faith and hope, totally penetrated with love.

The Crucified Christ, in suffering voluntarily His sadness even unto His death before each sin of every human being, and in the face of all the collected faults of humanity, has obtained for us the faith in His all-powerful Mercy, the Faith which has conquered the world, and with it, that invincible hope surpassing all the human hopes, as this faith and hope are penetrated and activated by this love which [1 Co 13:7] believes all and hopes all because it searches and loves only the will of God Itself.

Far from offering Himself to a God Who would be unable to reach due to His transcendence – the act of abandonment to the Father in and by Jesus Christ the Only Begotten and Most Beloved Son, flows from the most intimate depths of His human freedom towards the God Who is more intimate to us than we are in ourselves.¹¹⁵

3. The Act of Abandonment: an interiorizing ecstasy of a Freedom, desirous of Promising oneself to the God Who Promises Himself:

The Creator God Who is at the same time, the Last End to which all human beings tend and to whom all are invited to abandon themselves out of love, is a God present everywhere, as the Author of all and most especially of the great gifts of human intelligence and freedom. This is the God of interiority, the Illuminator and Mover of the unfathomable depths of each immortal soul.

The sanctifying Word and the loving Spirit to which each Christian is called to be abandoned in their entrusting their temporal and eternal destiny – are the very Persons Who arouse – in a single action of their two Persons – this one act of holy abandonment always re-presented and intensified.

Indeed, those who keep the commandments of Jesus Christ and loves Him, puts these into practice through life. All who love Christ and love Him totally, express this in an act of Holy Abandonment. He is 'Beloved' of His Father. The Father and the Son 'come' to this committed Believer, establishing within him/her Their Dwelling Place with the Holy Spirit, is neither received nor 'seen' by the world [Jn 14:17-24]. The Three together arouse the perfect practice of the First Commandment in an act of abandonment in the bosom of each one of them. The disposed believers thus become the 'listeners', or, those who 'understand' Jesus Christ [Jn 14:21].

This manifestation is an analogous experience to that of Jesus in His humanity: believers come to understand – as Jesus did, but, of course, in a degree

¹¹⁵ Leo XIII, *Divinum Illud Munus*, Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, May 9, 1897.

that is quite inferior – that their words and deeds are those which the Father says and achieves in them, as remaining within them [Jn 14:11]. They perceive, in the loving faith which theirs is, that the Father and the Son work out in them the act of abandonment in their regard which is the culminating point of the intimate and free acting.

This act of love is offered immediately, without any intermediary, to the God Who is immediately and intimately present to their immortal and spiritual soul. If the act of abandonment, in so far as it implies the exercise of intelligence, ties in with the intimate presence of the transcendent God and interiorizes Him the more in some way, in this one and the same act, in so far as it is indeed an act of love, casts this soul beyond itself towards Him. Thus the all loving God connects immediately in the depths of the committed believe open to him and rewards the person even more intensely with the gift of His immediate indwelling presence.

Therefore, the act of abandonment becomes thus an interiorizing ecstasy of the human intelligence and will. It is an ecstasy for it elevates the free will outside of itself, towards the transcendent Being Who takes up residence uninterruptedly in one's being. It is an interiorizing ecstasy, for this absolute Being dwells in the most intimate depths of the soul, at the same time as its immense Creator and as its triune and supernatural Host Who divinizes it.

The Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, helps us to grasp these dimensions, perhaps not sufficiently pondered thus far, in the act of Holy Abandonment. To better grasp this convergence, it would be helpful to recall the essential dimensions of the Franciscan Doctor's ideas on ecstasy.

The human spirit, the mind, enjoys the immediate presence of God, supreme Truth and there is the immediate and mutual presence of the soul to God and of God to the soul. Of this immediate presence there derives the possibility of an immediate knowledge of God by the soul. This comes about through ecstasy, which is realized in three stages: the departure from the exterior world on the part of the senses; the entrance into the interiority of the mind [reflection]; the penetration and the coming into the superior part of the mind, even to the lived contact with God. The Saint explains this: Ecstasy is the alienation with regard to the senses and to the exterior world, and conversion toward the interior God. The more the soul turns toward these interior realities, the more does it turn toward those eternal realities and joins in with them. The fruit of this abandonment of self is the fullness of the light of God which inundates the soul.

This ecstasy is therefore, an experimental knowledge of God, resulting from the Gift of Wisdom. In ecstasy, the intellectual knowledge without vision is harmonized with love. It is darkness for the intelligence and a flame for the will. The ecstatic union of the soul with God is the goal of all knowledge and of all activity, the genuine wisdom, for in it one knows by a real experience. Every just person can seek this.

It is commonly believed that the intensifying orientation towards the acts and the habit of abandonment is precisely the path of the just person towards ecstasy. For the abandonment to the incomprehensible and immanent God is an alienation with regard to the sensible world, and interiorization and elevation towards the Eternal. In Holy Abandonment there is realized an **obscure** and searing experience of the Creator, Provident God, our Last End. Holy Abandonment includes a renunciation of the world and of oneself with a view to an intimate and sweet contemplation [the Gift of Wisdom] of the Divine Will and Wisdom in the deepest depths of the immortal soul.

This ecstatic abandonment transforms one's prayer of petition as the virtue of Patience. One who abandons him/herself no longer seeks anything of God without noting one's exercise of abandonment of one's own will, for such a spiritual person desires only the accomplishment of the divine will.¹¹⁶ If one chooses to accomplish this, such a person likewise chooses above all else – if it can be said – to suffer the divinity and holy abandonment becomes – like patience itself – a martyrdom of love.¹¹⁷

In this context, one can understand that some theologians once [most often discouraged- it would be quite difficult to determine the precise 'content' of such a Vow] thought of making a **Vow of Holy Abandonment**. Perceiving the fragility of their freedom and fearing of losing their abandonment by an act of withdrawing their abandoned freedom, they hesitated and some settled for a Promise made to God of persevering in Holy Abandonment seeking a share in the divine immutability¹¹⁸ of the divine freedom which made the act of Abandonment on the Cross.

Some theologians looked upon such a vow as allowable, in that a vow of this nature would be a valid response of reciprocity in hope of the divine promises. In promising His gifts [a heavenly home, a Savior, life eternal], God had promised Himself. He had promised the incomprehensible Gift of Himself as one that is beyond all other gifts. He maintained His promise in an initial manner on the Cross and in the sacraments, notably in Baptism and the Eucharist. As a result, it was thought, that there would be nothing abnormal that a beneficiary of the Divine Promises who awaits their consummation in the grace of final perseverance, as in glory of the face-to-face beatific vision and of corporal resurrection, would wish perfectly to bind and abandon one's freedom by a promise of active abandonment, leading precisely toward that definitive acceptance of the promised goods. To the God Who promises Himself, the one who chooses to abandon him/herself eternally, might promise to be abandoned in a constant manner here below.

A like human promise [under the movement of grace] of being abandoned to the divine action includes necessarily a great and actual confidence in perseverance

¹¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 83, a. 5.

¹¹⁷ St. Gregory the Great, *Homily 35, 9 on the Gospels*.

¹¹⁸ St. Thomas, II-II, q. 88, a. 4.

of the divine assistance, the great Helper of the human will in abandoning itself. Such a Vow of obedience, say its backers, would correspond to the dynamism of **the theological virtue of hope**: in promising to the Merciful Creator to accept and to carry out His will, the one making this permanent state of abandonment by means of a promise, or vow, intensifies the life of charity which aspires always towards the ever more definitive consummation in the Reign of God and in the confident desire, always more intense, of emitting already here below to that act which arouses all this.

St. Claude La Colombiere, in promising to God to choose what was the more perfect, was implicitly vowed to the practice of Holy Abandonment. He has magnificently expressed his will of entrusting to God in his oft-quoted sermon:

... As for me, my God, I am so persuaded that You watch over those who hope in You, I am so persuaded that one will never lack anything when he/she awaits everything upon you that I have resolved to live toward the future without any concern and without emptying upon You all my restlessness: *...In peace in the selfsame I will sleep and I will rest; for You, O Lord, singularly have settled me in hope..* [Ps 4:9].

Others might despoil me both of goods as well as of honor, maladies might take from me all the forces and the means of serving You, I could yet even lose Your grace through sin, but never will I lose my hope in You. I will conserve it even to the very last moment of my life and all the demons of hell will bring forward at that moment all their efforts to snatch me away: *... in peace in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest; for You, O Lord, singularly have settled me in hope...* As for me, Lord, You are all my confidence, You are indeed my trust. I am assured that I will be eternally happy because I firmly hope to be all that you, O my God, wish, in this I hope in you: *in You, O Lord, I have hoped: and I will not be confounded forever ...* [Ps 31:2].

Sad to say, I know – and it is only too true – I know that I am fragile and changing. I know all too well that which those temptations against the virtues have greatly weakened me. I have seen the stars fall from the skies and the columns of the firmament shaken and fallen. But all these failures do not frighten me. This is because I hope so much in You, I believe that You have covered over all my evils. I am sure of hoping always because I hope still in Your liberality this unwavering hope.

Lastly, I am deeply convinced that I could not hope too much in You and that what I will obtain from You will always be more than I would have hoped in You. Indeed I hope that You will stop me from declines that are too rapid, that You will sustain me against the most furious assaults and that You will make my weakness triumph over my formidable enemies. I hope that You will love me always and that on my part; I will always love you without any lapses. And in order to bring all to the extent that my hope dares to look, I hope in You, o my Creator for all time and for all eternity...

This text expresses quite well the ecstatic aspect of the virtue of hope informed by love: in placing at its service all the passion of hoping, it tends towards

an eternal love of God loved for Himself and bases itself on the help of God in order to achieve possessing it.

Hope leaves behind itself, renounces itself in contemplating the fidelity of God to His promises. A similar ecstasy in abandonment imitates the ecstasy of God Himself, Who, according to Pseudo-Dennis, goes outside of Himself. St. Thomas in his Commentary on Dennis, notes that God ***goes beyond Himself in love.***

In going beyond Himself out of love for His universe, in rendering present in all the universe the fidelity of His love for human beings, in 'abandoning' Himself in some manner to humanity in the universe. God, in so far as He is such, Aquinas has noted, makes us comprehend how it is desirable for us to abandon ourselves to Him in abandoning ourselves to His Church and to human beings our brothers, as St. Ignatius of Loyola has understood this, as well as his spiritual son, St. Francis de Sales.

The mediation of the Church and of human beings is at the service of our relationship that is ever more immediate with what is both our last end as well as being immediate to us, in Jesus Christ. Our intermediary purposes – other persons and communities in the bosom of the Church – lead us toward our final end, which does not cease in being ever immediately attained in the act of charity. In loving one's neighbor to the point of abandoning ourselves to him, we love our love for Him. In this love, God is present and loving and it is He who we love and to Whom we abandon ourselves in abandoning ourselves to our neighbors, other Christs.

Summary

Ecstatic Abandonment, the Eternal Destiny of the Human Person

St. Thomas Aquinas has been of help in grasping better the social aspect of ecstatic abandonment. With St. Bonaventure, the Angelic Doctor assists us in comprehending that abandonment to the infinite and incomprehensible God is the destiny, not only temporal, but also eternal, of the human person and that this abandonment to the transcendent Being ought eternally to transfigure all its social and horizontal manifestations.

It has already been noted that holy abandonment is the ecstasy of the human intelligence and the loving will. St. Bonaventure brought out that ecstasy does not finish with the state of way-faring, it remains as well when we reach our eternal home, for this manner of knowledge, *by excess*, is common to heaven and earth. On earth, it is partial – whereas in our eternal homeland it is perfect in Christ and in the Elect.

The Seraphic Doctor explains: in order to arrive at a more perfect knowledge of the infinite Being which surpasses the capacity of the creature, the finite soul must tend towards Him in an excessive, ecstatic manner. This will no longer be just the end which one will receive the Infinite Being who totally surpasses the natural capacity of the creature. Rather, the infinite God will receive the soul into Himself – in

a perfect sense, the *Knower captures the known*. The soul will enter into the joy of its Lord [cf. Mt 21:21, ff.: **enter into the joy of Your Lord**]. The soul of Jesus Christ, a finite creature, could not comprehend the infinite Word, whatever is the union His soul has with Him. Jesus' human soul does not comprehend this totally but is rather comprehended by the Word. His human soul is borne toward the Eternal Word, not by way of comprehension but by the manner of, *by excess*, by the appetite and intelligence. Ecstasy is the end of all activity, even in the eternal dwelling, because in it alone is there achieved all truth and all good.

In heaven, therefore, there will be consumed the ecstatic abandonment of the soul to the loving will of the Creator. At the same time, there will be comprehended abandonment to one's neighbor, since the Plan of God regarding our neighbor is likewise incomprehensible as is the Divine Being itself, for these are in the perfect simplicity of the Infinite Being, identical to Him.

To abandon oneself to God is therefore to be abandoned to all his decrees on angelic and human beings. The ecstasy of abandonment to God becomes thus, for eternity, the ecstasy of loving abandonment to all the Elect, established in Him, forever. This will no longer be the abandonment to one's brothers and sisters which will lead to the abandonment to the Father [the terrestrial plan], but the abandonment to one's brothers and sisters will lead inexorably to the abandonment to the Father. Terrestrial and horizontal abandonment will lead to the total, celestial, definitive, uninterrupted to the Triune and Incomprehensible Love.



[C] JESUS' FILIAL CONSCIOUSNESS¹¹⁹

[1] To note even more clearly the difference in Jesus between **the Prayer of the Servant** and **the Prayer of the Son** – or, in other terms, between the obedience of the man Jesus and His Divine Filiation, it is better to take up again Heb 5:8: ... ***Although He was Son, He learned to obey through suffering...***

- and to ponder anew the magnificent commentary of Cardinal Newman noted above. Properly speaking, only Jesus in His human nature lived in a **total subordination** toward His Heavenly Father. This **perfect obedience** served as an **attitude of His human nature**, manifesting His response as **Servant**, as a **consequence of His Incarnation**.

[2] On the other hand, the **filial comportment** of Jesus Christ in His eternal relationship with His Father defines Him as the ***One who is***, i.e., **the Son of God**. It is significant that the Gospels teach us that in His human nature, Jesus manifests **both basic attitudes: total loving obedience** and a **filial attitude of service**. It is clear that this revelation of His **filial attitude** is not due merely to a theological interpretation on the part of the early Church, the **obedience of a Servant**, results clearly from the biblical texts. It is possible to reach Jesus' **Filial Consciousness**,

¹¹⁹ de la Potterie, *La Preghiera di Gesù*, o.c., pp. 129-145, *passim*.

Constitution, in itself, directly and not only through His obedience. This Filial Consciousness, Constitution, is the **central and most profound experience** of the Historical Jesus. This basic attitude becomes abundantly clear, particularly in **the prayers of Jesus**. This Constitutional Filiation results, on closer analysis, also in what the Gospels make clear in the revealed data regarding **His unique relationship with His Heavenly Father**. These insights have been brought to the fore by more recent developments in Christology.



1. The Title: *Son of God* in the Early Church

In the Profession of Faith of the Early Church there may be clearly seen that special place that this title enjoyed:

... I live now not with my own life, but with the life of Christ, Who lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live in faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and Who sacrificed Himself for my sake ... [Ga 2:20].

In this text the believer's attention is drawn to the intimate bond between the divine origin of Jesus Christ, His love for humanity and His redemptive oblation. Paul writes a bit further on in the same Epistle, regarding the Incarnation:

... when the appointed time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law And to enable us to be adopted as sons... [Ga 4:4, f.].

The divine origin of Jesus is so fundamental for Paul that in his letters he most often employs this formulation: ***The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...!*** [cf. 2 Co 1:3; 11:31; Ep 1:3; Col 1:3]. God is 'Father' of every human being as Creator, but He is this **in a unique manner** for Jesus Christ. This **unique Filiation** of Jesus has been revealed so that those who are **faithful** might remain **sharers, participants**, in **the divine nature as adopted children**.

2. In John's Theology: these themes assume a central importance. The 4th Evangelist makes abundantly clear that his scope is that all might believe that ***Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!*** [20:31; 1 Jn 5:13]. For Jn, the most characteristic title for **God** is [Jesus'] ***Father***,¹²⁰ as can be noted from the extraordinary frequency of the term Father in his writings.¹²¹ Correspondingly, in Jn there is a frequent reference to Jesus as the ***Son of God***,¹²¹ ***the Only-Begotten Son***.¹²² In 2 Jn, the author is able to formulate his own compendium of these and to express his basic theology in the Formula of Benediction:

¹²⁰ These statistics regarding the use of the word, *Pater*, are always interesting: Mt [64 x]; Mk [18 x]; Lk [56 x]; Jn [137 x]; 1-3 Jn [8 x].

¹²¹ Again: in Mt [11 x]; Mk [6 x]; Lk [8 x]; Jn 10 x]; 1-3 Jn [16 x].

¹²² This title is found only in Jn [1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9].

... In our life of truth and love, we shall have grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father ... [v 2].

3. The Johannine Fundamental Vision: some text of Jn permit the committed believer to determine even further the origin of **Jesus' Filial Consciousness**: ***... I and the Father are One!*** [10:30; 17:11, 22]. Between them, there is what theologians call a **perfect reciprocal immanence**: ***... I am in the Father and the Father is in Me...!*** [10:38; 14:11; 17:21, 23]. As a result, Jesus can state that He has an **immediate, absolute knowledge** of the Father: ***... I know Him because I come from Him and it was He Who sent me...!*** [7:29; 8:55; 17:25]. Jesus, Who has come from the Father, Who is with the Father has come and is present in this world [8:42; 16:27-28] – also maintains that He is going to **return to the Father** [16:10] – He goes to be with the Father [14:12]. On the day of the Resurrection Jesus declares to Mary Magdalene: ***... I am ascending to My Father ...*** [20:17]. Without any exaggeration that the **filial relationship** of Jesus with His Father, **His existential manner of living His closeness to the Father**, is the genuine core of the supreme importance of Johannine Christology. The entire profound life of Jesus is orientated, *turned toward* His heavenly Father, from which He comes into this world and toward Him He returns after fulfilling His Personal Mission. This is the filial **life** which He has come to reveal to us. But, it is also of supreme importance for **our life of adoptive filiation**. These are two basic ideas that Jn has been able to bring out in a few words:

a. *No one has ever seen God; it is only the Son Who is nearest to the Father's heart, Who has made Him known ...* [1:18]: this new attempt at translating this extraordinary passage has been a challenge. The text itself presents enormous problems – and there are many attempts to render its meaning:

- ***the Only Begotten Son, who has returned to the bosom of the Father, it is He Who has opened up the way ...***
- ***the Only-Begotten of God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He is the One Who has made Him known to us...***
- ***the Only Begotten Son, Who is turned toward the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him to us...***

Most exegetes would prefer to emphasize the aspect of the Son's **revealing the Father** – the third translation suggested just above bring out the more the inner Trinitarian relationship of Jesus toward His Father as the dynamic sense of ***turning eternally toward the Father***. Other recent studies in philology bring out this idea: ***Jesus has returned to the bosom of the Father***. The emphasis would be that **now Jesus is with the Father** - while others continue to maintain a more dynamic idea, there is movement in this relationship. The Old Latin Vulgate rendered it this way: ***Qui est in Sinu Patris***. [almost a maternal idea] – this would emphasize the 'post-Ascension Jesus' – the constant **turning toward** the Father [model and exemplary Cause for penitents, mystics – for all] brings out His terrestrial stance **as well as** His eternal situation.

The act of **revealing** the Father: some see that the evangelist here has referred to the historical permanent state of Jesus in this world. A close analysis of the Greek state seems to indicate that Jn is not only insisting upon Jesus' situation in this world, but is making known Jesus' **eternal situation that is never interrupted**. Jesus remains the Guide, the Way, Truth and love for all way-farers, persevering faithful, on the way to the Father – Jesus has indeed opened this up, particularly through the opening up of His Sacred Stigmata [CCC # 112].

It might be seen better now the relationship between the two parts of this one passage: one of the verbs is in the present tense, and the other is in the past. Jn, in the moment in which on writing his Gospel, composes this challenging Prologue, first tells the believer that Jesus Christ is indeed for him – as the evangelist is personally for us, the privileged witness – a faithful disciple, providing for the Church a believed testimony, of what he has seen, heard and touched [cf. I Jn 1:1, ff.] – as he tells us later about the blood and water from the **Pierced Side** of Jesus Christ:

... This is the evidence of one who saw it – trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth – and he gives it to you that you may believe as well. Because all this happens to fulfill the words of scripture... [Jn 19: 35].

In the light of the 'post-Easter' faith, Jn reflects on the past, and seeks to summarize the entire Christ-Event in a single word: and some scholars would choose this translation: **Jesus has opened up the way to the Father for all**. With this one verb, Jn would be introducing his entire Gospel – Jesus, **is the only Son, nearest to the Father's heart** [1:18] - **has now returned to the Father...** Therefore, Jesus' entire earthly sojourn has indicated the path to follow in this life, in which we are all heading home toward, to be with, the Father.

Understood in this way, Jn 1:18 offers a surprising parallelism to what He maintained at the Last Supper:

b. ...I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come through the Father except through Me ... Jesus' entire life is thus described as a **journey, exodus, pilgrimage toward the Father**. Thus, the entire Church, too, in her life's assisting believers, disciples, the crowd, needs to follow in His foot-steps. Put in other words, that which Jn wants to communicate is that the Life of Jesus Christ was constantly and fundamentally, and made known in an intensifying manner, a **Filial Life**. The time that Jesus lived on this earth is that time used to **reveal His unique Filiation**: this is a loving relationship which, beyond all else, is what constitutes all that He is and does. This period of Jesus among us, is clearly made known to us as **His time of Filiation**. Precisely because this unique relationship to the Heavenly Father is the foundation, **support**, the **source**, of our entire lives and our earthly sojourn: all are called to an ever increasing life of filiation.

There is thus comprehended that an over-all description on the ultimate and sublime meaning of Jesus' earthly life contains also an implicit indication on His **Prayer**. Since He is the Only Begotten Son of God in His entire earthly existence, constantly, consistently on His Way toward His Heavenly Father. As a result, His

Prayer of necessity had to be directed toward his Loving Father: in other words, **His basic Prayer is sublimely Filial**.

All this shows clearly the significance that Jesus' Life and His Prayer have also for believers of all ages. Jesus' prayer is the Prayer of the Divine Son of God. In it, there is revealed the essential core of the Mystery of His Divine Person. He is manifested to the faithful as **One Who is on His way toward His Heavenly Father and as One Who opens the path for us**. His Prayer, therefore, is called **existential** -and thus He is revealed as living an **attitude of Continual Prayer**. Jesus, in His Human Nature, remains always in relationship with His Heavenly Father – this means so to speak in a most profound sense, that His is always **Personified Prayer**. Therefore, all who are called to be the adopted Children of God and who are called to be this in an ever-increasingly manner the Children of God, through their faith and their prayer – are being called, invited, challenged to participate in this filial prayer of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of the Heavenly Father.

4. The Filial Consciousness of the Historical Jesus: faithful believers need to contemplate these texts all through life, and they will lead to a deeper understanding of the carefully chosen title of Jesus, as **the Son of God** in the fullest sense of the term. While this title does indicate the essential prerogative of Jesus Christ, for many they do not say much on Jesus' **Personal Filial Consciousness**. To take up the question of **the existential reality of Jesus' Filial Consciousness** can only have meaning in the context of His earthly sojourn. Recent scholars have made clear that the authentic origin of the Post-Easter use of the title, the 'Son of God' with reference to Jesus Christ, is to be sought and is rooted in His own Filial Consciousness of Jesus on earth prior to Easter, in the course of His earthly life.

Today it can be said without any fear of error that Jesus Christ spoke of God so often as **His Father**, in a sense, context that makes it unique to Him. In all four gospels Jesus clearly distinguishes between **My Father**, and **your Father**.¹²³ My uses both formulations in one and the same Chapter, at a distance of only a few verses from one another [7:11, 21]. This distinction is all the more striking especially in His message to Mary Magdalene on the day of the Resurrection [Jn 20:17]. In His Prayer, Jesus employs in addressing Himself to His Father, a formula which has no real equal in ancient Jewish piety in reference to God: **Abba! My Father!** This use has so struck the first Christian communities which Paul asks its faithful to repeat in their prayers this Aramaic Prayer of Jesus Himself, so that they might indeed become also by means of the Holy Spirit the Children of God [cf. Ga 4:6; Rm 8:15]. If Jesus indeed does consider God as His Father, this is because He knows that He is indeed God's Only Begotten, Most Beloved son. It is probable that Jesus is not qualified directly as the Son of God, but in the greater part of the texts He defines Himself as **The Son** in the **absolute** sense [Mt 11:25-27, par.; 21:37, 38, par.; 24:36, par.].

¹²³ **My Father:** Mt 7:21; 10:32, f.; 11:27 [=Lk 10:22]; 12:50; 16:17; 26:39, 42; Lk 2:49; 22:29; 24:49; Jn 5: 17, 43; 6:32, 40; 8:19, 49, 54; 10:18, 25, 29, 37; 14:7, 20, 21, 23; 15:1, 8, 15, 23, 24; 20:17.

Your Father: Mt 5:16, 45-48; 6:1, 8, 14, 15, 26, 32; 7:11; Mk 11:25, 26; Lk 6:36; 11:47, 48; 12:30, 32; Jn 20:17]: - Jesus indeed is **the Son of God, equal to the Father** [Jn 5:18].

The first of these texts, sometimes called the Synoptics' **Hymn of Jubilation** helps us to understand better that which the filial consciousness would have meant for Jesus. When He says: **Everything has been given to Me by the Father** - He is claiming for Himself the universal sovereignty that Daniel had attributed to the **Son of Man** [Dn 7:14]. This sovereignty consists in the fact that He possesses the secrets of God, but also in the fact that He has the right and the mission to reveal these special secrets of holiness. Speaking thus, Jesus reveals His consciousness of being the King of the Reign of God. The corollary to this indicates the object of this Divine revelation of God Himself and His Plan of Salvation: basically, the Mystery of the Father and the Son, disposed eternally toward humanity. The Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father. This mutual consciousness is perfect, exclusive, unique. However, the Son, and He alone, can reveal this mystery. Beyond all doubt this perfect knowledge in the mind and heart of Jesus is the consequence of His divine origin: precisely in so far as He is the Son, **Jesus knows Him Who is His Father**.

5. Master, where do You live [remain]? [Jn 1: 38, f.]: a Commentary from the early Middle Ages: the profound mystery of the unique relationship between Jesus and His Father and their mutual Indwelling is explained quite well in a spiritual and Trinitarian sense by William of St. Thierry, friend and biographer of St. Bernard. In his Meditation on the Call of the first Disciples who, on the testimony of John the Baptist, have followed Jesus, offers this reflection on the request of the Disciples. **To remain** is an important word throughout the entire 4th Gospel:

... I remain in the Father and the Father remains in Me [1:38] – enjoys an apparently very banal. So, it is frequently thought to mean: *where is your home?* William, however, contemplated the episode profoundly:

... O Truth, respond to me, I beg you. Rabbi, where do you live? Come, He said, and You will see. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me. May thanks be rendered to You, O Lord, because we have progressed not a little way: we have found Your Home. Your Father is Your Dwelling Place, and You are where the Father dwells. Beginning with this privileged 'Place' you, O God, are localized. However, this is a most sublime locality, far more secret than any absence from a Place. This locality consists in the unity of the Father and the Son, in the consubstantiality of the Trinity...

This is a rather 'bold' text. William has been blessed with the extraordinary intuition, as often happens among the fathers of the Church and the great minds and hearts of the Middle Ages - that here the evangelist introduces a theme which will then be developed much further. The entire later development is here anticipated in a few simple words in this single verse and then applied to an historical happening. IN the instant of the encounter of the first Disciples with Jesus the verb **to dwell, remain**, obviously did not yet have that profound theological meaning that it would take on in the logical unfolding of the Gospel. However, this meaning was already prepared for from this very beginning. In this sense, the *explicitation* which William was able to provide for the subsequent understanding in his commentary of Jn 1:38-

39 is well founded: he enables the later Church to **contemplate the prophetic and pre-figurative value** of this text. Interpretations of this kind are most beneficial to developing Christology: they help believers, contemplating the mystery through prayer, that to remain *with Jesus*, one is being called by grace to become one who **remains in Jesus and in the Father**.

In the texts of Jn, the relationship between the Only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of the Heavenly Father is not focusing on the Eternal Word within God, staying on an exclusively Trinitarian level. But, there is also and above all an emphasis given to Jesus in His human nature, constantly, repeatedly, relating, turning toward, God the Father. Right here is the ultimate Mystery: Jesus in His human nature is the Only Begotten Son of God. In Him, the Eternal Son of the Father speaks, acts and prays. This becomes the *epiphany* for all attentive and faithful believers that He is indeed the Son of God, the Eternal Word, Who comes from God and In Whom God is uniquely present. There appears precisely here the absolutely central importance of this human consciousness that Jesus enjoyed of His Divine 'Ego'. This is His consciousness of being the son of God.

This Filial Consciousness is at the core of Jesus' sacred humanity – and beginning with this theology developed devotions such as **the Sacred Heart, the Sacred Stigmata**, in their most profound depths. Thus theologians can fearlessly proclaim: if the student begins from the pure abstract historical objectivity – from an historical grasp of the Gospels - it will always be impossible to risk any leap in the Mystery from which springs the sublime and dynamic faith of the Church. This is the **Mystery of the Filial Consciousness that Jesus had of Himself**. This **Mystery of Jesus Filial Consciousness** is also the spring board for the Mystery of the **Sacred Heart, the Sacred Stigmata** and sheds infinite light on the **Mystery of Jesus' Prayer**. This can make sense only to the committed believer. This is only available to the truly Faithful Believer - one who hears the Word of God and takes it to heart is disposed through Grace and the Gift of Wisdom by living Charity to contemplate in prayer and study this Mystery of Divine Filiation and its corollaries.

6. Prolongation of the Christology of Chalcedon: some recent theologians have often objected that the structure of the Christology proposed by the Great Council of 451 has by now been surpassed. And yet, the Christology of this Ecumenical Council cannot be rejected by believers, as it has provided a defined dogma for the Church's articulated belief. Yet, one of the interesting requests of modern Christologists is that of considering Chalcedon as **a point of arrival in the dogma, and a point of departure for further contemplative study** [cf. DV 8].

According to the teaching of Chalcedon, it is necessary to recognize one and the same Jesus Christ **in two natures, in one person, one single hypostasis** [DS 302]. The formula of Chalcedon would imply, for some scholars, a missing sufficient recognition of the historical dimension of Jesus Christ. There is no doubt the Council did bring out the fact that Jesus Christ is *perfectus in humanitate* - but there is a pressing need to rivet the 'metaphysical' concepts in historical terms to present the integral mystery of Jesus Christ to believers. Great efforts have been made in recent

years to bring out the 'human' dimension of Christ, present in the concrete reality of His human nature – and not all of these attempts are to be considered amiss. There is need to think of the existential historical reality of Jesus Christ as well as His divine origins in order to be truly faithful to Chalcedon. This present balanced theological effort strives to use the definitions of the Church, surely a point of arrival in the Body of the Lord, to serve also as a point of departure.

Many well known theologians are moving in this direction: some bring out the fact that the theological task is that of showing that the historical dimension of the hypostatic union of two natures in the one Divine Person is to bring more evidence to the intimate bond between that which is historical, and that which is only apparently beyond history in the dogma of Chalcedon. Others wish to take up and develop this thrust even further, applying them more directly to the theme emphasized here: **the divine origins of Jesus Christ**. The proposal is to **prolong Chalcedon**, leading to a fuller recognition of the Greek word; ***perichoresis***: **the union of the divinity and the humanity** in the will and in the human operations of Jesus Christ that **penetrates His divine will and actions**.

Once again, a good witness is Maximus the Confessor: beyond Jesus' human condition, He worked out in His earthly sojourn **all that was human**, manifesting throughout His intimate union and the **perfect harmony** of His human activity with His divine power. One of His two natures, united without mixture to the other, **penetrated** it completely. In this, **nothing was accomplished outside** of the action of the other: ***actiones sunt suppositorum*** – **nothing was separated from the Divinity** [the ***Crucified God*** of J. Moltmann??], which was united to it according to His Divine Person. In the prolongation of the Chalcedon Christology, the concrete operation of Jesus is characterized as the place of His revelation – and, inversely, the **action of God** is manifested as the 'place' of the revelation of the human realm, of all that is fully human.

It is good to look at another definition - and this, likewise, is very *dense* – that of the ***perichoresis***, according to St. John damascene. The natures of Christ are united without admixture, according to His Divine ***hypostasis***. These manifest a **mutual penetration**, but each nature maintains the distinction of its own nature. Theologians point out that the term ***perichoresis*** has meant an enormous progress for Christology. However, its limitations must also be kept in mind, because the divine action of His human nature was also conceived in a specific moment, as a 'metaphysical instant.' This conception needs to be further developed by an effort in integrating in Jesus' historical human action the concrete events and the development of His earthly life, i.e., its real becoming, increase and development which this implies [cf. Lk 2;52: ***And Jesus increased in wisdom and nature and in favor with God and men...!***]. Recent theology, therefore, proposes **to consider the lived human history of Jesus Christ as a concrete event of His Hypostatic Union**. Jesus indeed **is** the Son of God in the fullest sense possible of understanding the phrase, but He experiences and reveals this reality in a progressive manner in time: Jesus has shown Himself in His earthly journey as the Son of God, precisely because He it is Who believes, trusts, fully in God, His

Heavenly Father – He is the One Whose food is to do the will of God His Father. In the perfection of these basic attitudes of His, He reveals that in all these situations it is only by beginning with God that He becomes Himself, comprehends Himself and becomes comprehensible also for all believers.

All these reflections are close to that which has been seen under a variety of perspectives: the Prayer of Jesus Christ reveals in a unique manner His special relationship with His Heavenly Father. It is rather convincing that a further and deeper contemplation on the Christology of Chalcedon. With emphasis of Jesus inserted into the **History** of His **time**, is a most important theological enterprise. That which needs to be explained ever more is the **filial aspect**, typical of the life of Jesus, and His **filial consciousness**. The time of Jesus was the time of His Filiation, the time of **the foundation of Christianity**. Therefore, the effort needs always to shed more light on this aspect of the life of Jesus beginning with His filial consciousness and to see how this has been lived existentially of the man Jesus in His Prayer addressed to His Father. These are very important aspects for the on-gong renewal of Christology – and the spiritual life of committed Believers.

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F. ASPECTS OF THE ECCLESIAL TRADITION

1. Theological Development through the Centuries [Fr. Sebastian TROMP, SJ]

In addition to his very important article of 1932,¹²⁴ this Jesuit scholar spent most of his long life studying ecclesiology – often studying the image of the Pierced side of Jesus Christ. He played a substantial role in the Second Vatican Council.

Fr. Tromp noted a wide variety of verbs in his well documented study on the birth of the Church from the side of the dead Christ on the Cross. He noted that the Church was built up, established [*aedificatam*]. In establishing this, the scholar made several points – and each one of these headings might find repeated reference in the voluminous writings of the early Church Fathers:

- certainly Jesus Christ suffered for the Church [*passum esse*];
- Christ gave birth to the Church [*peperisse*]; constructed her [*construxisse*]; established her [*aedificasse*]; formed her [*formasse*]; founded her [*fundasse*]; and consecrated her [*consacrasse*]. And all of this on the Cross;
- on the part of the Church she was born of the side of Christ [*ortam esse*]; as a New Eve;
- she came forth from the side of the sleeping Christ [*prodisse*]; she was established from His side [*aedificatam esse*];
- the marriage of Christ and the Church occurred on the Cross;
- the Church received new life and the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the Cross, by Whom Christ joined the Church to Himself to form one body, one flesh;
- the Church came forth [*exorta*] on the Cross, spiritually forever united to Christ, its Head;
- the Church was impregnated by the seed of the Spirit of Christ [*fecundata*];
- on the Cross, the Church arises [*exoritur*] as a Holy Mother of the faithful, of the living.

Fr. Tromp's work contributed greatly to Pius XII's work on *Mystici Corporis* during the years of the Second World war – and *Haurietis Aquas*, of 1956. The great scholar contributed to the theology of the Mystical Body and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Church has prayed for centuries: ***From the rent Heart the Church joined to Christ, is born***. Hence, there is a deep bond in the Jesuit devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the birth of the Church from the side of Jesus Christ.

¹²⁴ S.Tromp, SJ, 'De Nativitate Ecclesiae ex Corde Iesu,' in: *GREGORIANUM* 1932, pp.489-527

From Leo XIII's Encyclical, *Divinum Illud Munus*, Pentecost of 1897, Fr. Tromp noted three stages in the formation of the Church: **conceptio, ortus** and **manifestatio** :

- ***conceptio*** : this is seen as the time of Christ's preaching – His announcing of His Person and His Mission, united in the reign of God. In this phase of the coming Church, she had not yet been animated by the vivifying Spirit of the Risen Christ – hence, the Immaculate Bride.

- ***ortus*** : at the hour when Christ was raised up on the Cross and would draw all to Himself, thus fulfilling His own prophecy, she comes into being from the open side. In Jn 17, Christ *consecrates* Himself and prays for Peter and the College of Apostles this is the supreme Hour of His ex – ***spiring***, and the sending out of His Holy Spirit, breathing new life into the scattered children of God, uniting all in the one Body and Blood. With His *consummatum est*, [cf. Jn 19:30] Christ handed His Spirit over to the Father and the Holy Spirit was sent out through the Church. With Christ breathing new life into the Church, through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, this is the birth of the Church.

- ***manifestatio*** : the gift of supernatural life was communicated to the Church, flowing forth from deep within the Tabernacle of the Trinity, the opening in the side symbolizing for many the Sacred Heart – the symbol and fount of the three-fold divine love. As the Church is born from the **rent** Heart of Christ, it comes to be manifested through the sacraments, visible signs communicating a share in the Trinity. The gift of supernatural life communicated to the Church by Christ, burst forth from His sacred side, from His heart, the symbol and fount of the love of His wounded heart.

In this, Fr. Tromp emphasized more Jesus giving up His Spirit [cf. Jn19:30] rather than the piercing of the side of Christ [cf. Jn 19:34]. The great Jesuit's emphasis was more on the Church being born of the **rent wounded Heart** [ex Corde scisso] - the unique symbol of Jesus' salvific love, and the supernatural life of the Spirit ***ex – spired*** by Jesus into His Bride at His death. Thus, the Church is born under these two aspects on Calvary: from the giving of the Holy Spirit on Calvary – and also with the profusion of Blood and Water from His opened sacred side. These are brought together in this later text with the blood and water [on Calvary a bloody sacrifice] and in 1 Jn 5:7, an indication of how entrance into the Church occurs: ... ***there are three who give testimony concerning Jesus, the redeemer: the spirit, the water and the blood.*** Thus, the Spirit is present in the communication of God's life through Baptism and the Eucharist, bringing about that these created elements be the separated agents, instruments, of the wonders achieved by the conjoined Instrument, of Jesus' incarnate body.

Human redemption and Martyrdom are symbolized by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. The Church lives in ***gaudium et spes*** : rejoicing, because she has arisen from the side and heart of the Lord; hoping, that her members remain faithful in their life-long Pilgrimage of Faith leading to the celestial Holy of Holies.

2. **Sacred Heart Liturgy and Devotion:**¹²⁵ there are three texts in particular worthy of our intention: the Vespers Hymn; Matins for the Feast Day; and Matins for the 4th Day of the Octave:

a. **Vespers Hymn for the Evening before and all through the Octave:**
 ‘... the multitude of our sins has wounded the Innocent Hert of a God Who does not deserve this. Our sins directed the spear of the brandishing soldieer and a moralcrime sharpened the iron of the cruel point. From the rent Heart [***Ex Corde scisso***] the Church, joined to Christ, is born: This door in the side of the Ark [***hoc ostium arcae inlatere est***] has been placed for the salvation of the race. From this there is eternal grace, or a seven-fold stream [***ex hoc perennis gratia seu septiformis fluvius***] so that we might wash our stained garments in the Blood of the Lamb...’

While there is not specific mention of the Blood and water, there is an indication of the soldier, the spear. There is a hint here of Rv 7:14: ... ***they have washed their robes and made them white...*** There is also some mention of the **Nuptial Theme** an allusion most likely to Ep 5:22-27; Gn 2:22, f. The word sacrament is not used, but there is a seven-fold stream of grace – certainly not referring to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in this context!

b. **Matins for the Feast Day:** this is outstanding also for the citation of St. Bonaventure, and his *Tree of Life* text quoted above. The emphasis on the **Heart** of Christ, over the sacred **Side** of Christ, technically has no immediate basis in Scripture. The WOUnded **Heart** of Christ thus becomes an additional object of theological reflection, almost independent of the wounded side of Christ, and became far more remembered in the prayer life of the Church. Eventually, Pius XII, in his *Haurietis Aquas*, would unite Heart and Side in the devotion.

c. **Matins on the 4th Day of the Octave:** many of the readings for the refurbished liturgy for this Feast were interspersed from Pius XI’s ***Miserentissimus Redemptor***. The third Noctur, however, following the reading of Jn 19:34, was from St. Lawrence Justinina, and his work: *On the Triumphal Agony of Christ*. These lines stand out:

... the wisdom of God wished to entrust to us the greatest sacrament, namely the unity of the Church itself. For the figure of this **spiritual bond** happened before, whenone of his **ribs** is said to have beentaken out from the side of the sleeping Adam, and from it Eve, the Mother of all,w as formed, who acted **as a type of the Church**. Then, the Holy Spirit indicated that the true and Spiritual Adam would be Him Who was formed by the power of the Paraclete; for while He slept on the Cross, **from His side, blood and water flowing out, the Church, the beautiful Bride without wrinkle and stain, was formed...**

¹²⁵ For these pages, cf. Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background*. o.c., pp./ 257- 283, *passim*.

This text seems to combine Ep 5:22-32; Gn 2:21, f.; 3:20 – the mysterious union between a man and a woman is the type of an even greater mystery; **the two shall become one** – the end result is that she is called to be **the mother of all**. This event foreshadowed the union, the **Sacred Nuptials** [cf. Rv 21] between Christ and His Church, the Immolated Lamb and His People. The **Holy Spirit** is also explicitly acknowledged. The **water of regeneration** and the **blood of purification** unite unto eternal happiness in the heavenly kingdom. There is here introduced a clear **eschatological hope**.

3. The Teaching Magisterium prior to Vatican II: this would be a special study in itself. For our purposes here, we will quote only two documents: Leo XIII's, ***Divinum Illud Munus*** of Pentecost 1897 – and ***Mystici Corporis***, during the time when World War II raged almost everywhere. A few comments follow:

a. ***Divinum Illud Munus* [May 9, 1897]** : Pope Leo XIII hoped through this Encyclical that he might continue his mission of restoration of the principles of Catholic life, the reunion of those who had fallen away from the faith. The great Pope also wanted to inculcate devotion to the Holy Spirit. In the development of his Letter, he anchors his thoughts solidly in the mystery of the Trinity – then he dedicated some thought to the Person of the Holy Spirit.

In some editions, he offers these thoughts in the opening of n. 5:

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 of men on the great day of Pentecost. On that day the Holy Spirit began to **manifest** His gifts in the Mystic Body of Christ, but that **miraculous outpouring** already foreseen by the Prophet Joel [2:28, f.], for the Paraclere 'sat upon the Apostles as though new spiritual crowns were placed on their heads in tongues of fire' [St. Cyril]. Then the Apostles 'descended from the mountain,' as St. John Chrysostom writes, 'not bearing in their hands tables of stone like Moses, but carrying the Spirit in their mind, and **pouring forth the treasure and the fountain of doctrines and graces** [In Mt, Hom 50; 2 Co 3:3]. Thus was fully accomplished that last promise of Christ to His Apostles of sending the Holy Spirit, who was to complete, and, as it were, to **seal the Deposit of Faith** committed to them under His inspiration. If I have many things yet to say to you but you cannot bear them now; but when He, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, He will teach you all truth...' [Jn 4:12, f.] .

Thus, so many of the previously seen elements are present in the brief introductory line here: the Church's conception; its birth, its manifestation. The death of Christ is not highlighted, nor that His side was pierced, nor the blood and water. However, the emphasis on Pentecost and the Holy Spirit places the third stage of the Church – in the forefront. Nothing seems to have led up to the inclusion of this image in the Letter, nor is much concluded from it – even though the **pouring forth of the treasure, and the fountain of doctrines**, might be what is intended.

b. ***Mystici Corporis* [June 29, 1943]**: the World was at war, Christian nations were bombarding one another and tearing each other to death. The Encyclical manifests three parts:

- the Church is the mystical Body of Christ – she is both visible and has invisible elements;
- the need for the union of the faithful – manifested externally by a common profession of faith – and internally, by the Indwelling of the Trinity and the living of the theological life;
- false notions of unity – the need of some cautions regarding the private side of the living of the Faith – as in the sacrament of Penance and the life of prayer.
- the Conclusion, refers to Mary on Calvary as the second Eve.

The Letter teaches that Christ is the Founder, Head, Support and Savior of the Church, as His own Body. Pius XII then quotes from Leo XIII's Letter, n. 5, cited above. The war-time Pope then develops the stages of the Church's development: the Church was conceived, or prepared for by Christ's preaching – the Savior chose apostles, sent them out as teachers. He prescribed Baptism and other means – then, at the Last supper He instituted the Eucharist.

The second stage of the founding of the Church took place on Calvary – there Jesus brings to completion what He had begun to build, the mystical temple of the Church:

35: That He completed His work on the gibbet of the Cross is the unanimous teaching of the Holy Fathers, who assert that the Church **was born from the side of our Savior on the Cross, like a New Eve, the Mother of all Living.** 'And it is now,' says the great Ambrose, speaking of the **pierced side of Christ**, 'that it is built, it is now that it is formed, and it is now that it is moulded, it is not that it is created...How it is that arises a spiritual house for a holy priesthood.'...

Jesus brought to completion the work of founding the Church. Jesus, it is true, preached within narrow earthly limits, as He was sent solely for 'the lost sheep of Israel' [cf. Mt 15:24]. However, by His death on the Cross, He opened up a New Covenant of Mercy in His Precious Blood poured out for the entire human race – all are being drawn to the One raised up. Christ was already the Head of the human family – through the power of the Cross, He merited 'capital' to spend on humanity: He merited power and dominion over the nations as St. Thomas noted.¹²⁶

The fact of this passing over from the Old Law to the New, from the Synagogue to the Church, became evident at Christ's death when the **Mystical Veil** of the temple was rent from top to bottom. Jesus had completed His work with His abundant communication of the Holy Spirit. After the Veil was torn, the gifts of the Holy Spirit burst forth, poured out on the whole earth. There is much emphasis in this war-time encyclical on the universal effects of Christ's death.

¹²⁶ III, q.42, a.1.

The third and final sage for the founding of the Church, came on Pentecost: the church was already established [**condidit**] – then it was fortified [**roboravit**] – finally on Pentecost, it was ‘up and running.’ The spiritual Power of Pentecost manifested and promulgated His **Bride** by the visible coming of the Holy Spirit. The life of the Apostolic Mission carried out in the Church was prefigured already in the Life of Christ on earth.

In Vatican II

A. Sacrosanctum Concilium

... 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 of the whole Church.’

[SC 5].¹²⁷

Presentation:

[1] This section of the Liturgical Constitution offers the general principles for the promotion and restoration of the sacred Liturgy. The emphasis here is, as always, the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. The inspiration is the universal salvific will of God – that all be saved and **come to the knowledge of truth**: [1 tm 2:4]. This will of God is the motivating force of Christ’s Incarnation – and the work He began is continued across the centuries in and through the Church.

[2] These two Missions are truly one, focused on the integral Paschal Mystery. The role of the Church is to bring human beings to participate in this redemptive mystery in their lives. This Paschal Mystery is celebrated unceasingly in the Eucharist. The quote on the **side of Christ** binds the mission of Christ to that of the Church – the two missions come together right here.

[3] There are many aspects to the Mission of Jesus Christ as we learn from Scripture – these are now continued in the Church: He came to heal; He is the Mediator, the Instrument of Salvation; through Him there is perfect satisfaction for reconciliation of humanity with God; Jesus’ purpose was that of human redemption; the Church is sent for liberation, another term for salvation. These are all accepted **Models of Redemption**.¹²⁸



¹²⁷ For an extended commentary on this, cf. Martin L. Smith, *Vatican II on the Wounded Side of Christ in Context and Background*. o.c., p. 349=408.

¹²⁸ cf. *Anselm of Canterbury. The Major Works*. Oxford Classics 1998; *Aa.Vv., Cur Deus Homo. Roma, 21-23 maggio 1998*. Roma: Studia Anselmiana 1998; *Aa.Vv. Gesu’ Cristo e l’unicita’ della mediazione*. Milan: Pauline 2000; *Aa.Vv., La redenzione nella morte di Gesu’*. Milano: Pauline 2001; *AULEN, G., Christus Victor*. Eugene OR; Wipf & Stock 1931; re-print 2003; *Dillistone, F. W., Christian Atonement*. Philadelphia: Westminster 1968; *Green, J. B & Baker, M.D., Recovering the Scandal of the Cross. Atonement in NT & Contemporary Contexts*. Downer’s Grove IL: InterVarsity Press 2000; *Neri, F., Cur Verbum Capax Hominis. Le ragioni dell’incarnazione della seconda Persona della Trinita’ fra teologia scolastica e teologia contemporanea*. Roma: Gregorian 1999.

In previous times, the Church was studied with a particular view regarding her four mrks: One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic.[And some would add a fifth, suffering]. Theologians in the Council emphasized the different aspects, stages of the birth of the one true Church established by Jesus Christ:

- **Kerygmatic**: this is the Church being established through the preaching of God's word through the centuries. As in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, this serves as a metaphor for the Word of God, until the coming of the Incarnate Word of God.
- **Mariological**: Mary's response to the Word of God with her *fiat* is also the conception of the Church and its eventual birth from the womb of Mary.
- **Eucharistic**: at the Last Supper when Jesus established the Eucharist, He also established the Church: ***This is My Body ... do this in memory of Me...***
- **'Stigmatine'**: when the Roman soldier opened the sacred side of Christ, the Church was born.
- **Pentecost**: the Church was born when the Holy Spirit breathed out new olife into the pardoned Apostles.

Both Leo XIII and Pius XII treated of the image of the open side of Christ – but the SC Commission chose only the former's use of it. The Pope in 1897 had noted that the Church has already been conceived and then was brought forth. The thrust of these expressions is to emphasize the more the act of redemption as assisting the poor, healing the contrite, and offering medicine for the sickness of sin. The Church simply continues the redemptive intervention of Jesus by her preaching and exercising her ministry. The long centuries of the Church being prepared would offer some hint into the imagery of thinking of the Church as already conceived. For Leo XIIIth, Pentecost is the ultimate stage in the birth of the Church. Thus there are centuries that have intervened between the Church's conception and eventual manifestation as coming together in completion on Pentecost.

So prior to the opening of Christ's side, and the coming of the Spirit after Chirst had ex-spired, shows elements of foundation during the earthy sojourn of Jesus, noted in the existence of founding passages. So rather than stating that the Church is born from the entire Paschal Mystery, some precision is brought to the fore by SC The Church is intimately associated, then, with the ultimate act of redemption being completed after Christ's death. Therefore, it is not only with the death of Christ that His 'torch is handed on' in the form of His word at His death. New life has come through the death and dying of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Church is not born from the lifeless body of Jesus, but as the result of His life-long obediential love, His sacrificial dying, His total Self-immolation in Jesus' return to His merciful Father.

There is thus clarified the bond that now serves as an important link between the redemption of the world, principally through the integral paschal mystery of Jesus, and what the Church is to live as she wends her painful journey through time. The permeating mediation of the Paschal Mystery is perpetuated through the

sacraments and preaching, which are not mere additions to the Church – but her essential mission. The Church now serves as the Mediator of the Paschal Mystery. The Mission of the Church flows from its birth – the birth of the Church is included within the very act of human redemption.

Christ is presented in the tradition as sleeping – in some of the old songs of the St. Basil's Hymnal, something of a stir was aroused in the careful listeners to a very popular Easter Hymn: For His death was only slumber, He has risen up again! The description often given is that the patristic tradition early on linked this scene with the **Genesis [2:21-24]** formation of Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam. This was then coupled with **Rm 5:14: Adam was a type of the One to come - ... for this reason a man leaves his parents ...** [Ep 5: 31, f.]: this nuptials is a great mystery, **the reference of the sponsal union of Christ with His Bride, the Church**. The emphasis here is not so much on the **rib**, as it is on seeing the sleep of Adam a pre-figuration of the integral realization of Jesus' Paschal Mystery.

In this sense, of using the prefigure of the Sleeping Adam, the dead Christ is used without any fear of misunderstanding – once the facts are known. Thus, the theological context – with its connection to Gn 2, showing Jesus as the 'New Adam', is very suited for this title. In this SC 5, the opening line shows Jesus as a descendant of Adam – it is this humanity, united with the divine Person and Word of God, that initiates a brand new human race. This is the *instrument* of our salvation: our liberation from the power of Satan and death, the effects of the original sin. The obedience of Jesus Christ frees us from the effects of the primal disobedience – the Second Adam, different from the first, and His 'sleeping' is His redemptive death.

2. As Jesus is the 'New Adam', the Church is the 'New Eve':

This is the implication in using Gn 2: 21,ff. – which was originally a sign of **oneness** between wife and husband. This is behind Paul's use of this rich image, **this is a great mystery** [cf. Ep 5:23,ff.: ... **Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, and is Himself its Savior... Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her...**] – symbolizing Christ's Self-giving, immolating, union with the Church. The Pierced Side of Calvary is a distinct parallel with Gen 2. Thus the juxta-position of the NT texts of Ep 5 and Jn 19 next to Gn 2 offers a scriptural basis, the implication is that Mary is the New Eve, even though this paragraph does not state that explicitly.

The New Eve points to a very deep relationship of Self-giving love [the Gift of a Husband's Love] – SC refers at least four times to the Church as the **Bride of Christ** [cf. ## 7;47;84; 85] - and the Church is called the **Bridegroom** twice [cf. ## 84; 102]. As the nuptial theme applied to Christ and the Church indicates His ardent loving election of the Church, Christ as the Head of the Body indicates His making up one Body, His life-giving union with the Church.

The marriage centered images emphasize an element of willful, free and loving choice, freedom of response with regard to the Church's relationship with

Jesus. As the first Eve is remembered as the Mother of the Living [cf. Gn 3:21] implies and serves prophetic to the idea of Mary the Mother of the Church – her physical giving birth to Christ in Nazareth a painless bring to the light – the Motherhood of the Church occurs in the agony of Calvary, witnessing the piercing of her Son's side. The Motherhood image is employed seven times in SC [cf. ## 4;14;21;60;85;102; 122]. The Apostles are called to continue and to hand on the Personal Mission Jesus received from His Father and has committed to His Church. They are anointed to bring all into ecclesial filiation the People of God with the Trinity. This communicating a New Birth, a the strengthening and nourishing of it through the sacraments – particularly sharing the Supper of the Lord – and to teaching God's People His word, is the Apostolic Mission to be continued until the end of time.

3. Unity and Distinction:

There is great emphasis on the oneness between Christ and His Church as is evident in the titles that are bandied about. The Church is the *New Eve*, the *Bride*, the *Body of Christ* - and He is the *Bride-groom*. Thus, this union is necessary for the Church depends upon her very existence on this bond The Church pertains to the very act of redemption carried out on Calvary. This bond is even further specified by bringing in the Holy Spirit, Who anoints Jesus, the Apostles and filled them with their Apostolic Mission. This Mission was fulfilled by Jesus, and is now to be announced by the Apostles and exercised until the end of time. The Church is indeed **the total Christ**.

Yet, with this there is careful instruction on the distinction between Christ and His Church – they are united, they are one – but not identical: Christ is the **New Adam**, the Church is the **New Eve**. It is clearly Jesus Christ who sends His Apostles forth in every century to serve the ministry of salvation, He is the Agent, and the Apostles like the Church, remain recipients of His grace-filled personal Mission.

While the term the **wondrous sacrament** began to be applied to the Church in a way that it had hardly ever been before in the public mind – it also seems that this is like a corollary of the Church being born from the side of Christ, Who remains the **primordial Sacrament**. It is indeed God will that all human beings be saved [cf. 1 Tm 2:4], and come to the full knowledge and the living of the truth. This universal salvific will of God is to be realized in and through the Church. For this to come about, through the centuries Hebrews [cf. 1:1, ff.] speaks of the many ways God has spoken to His people across the ages – now, He has sent His Son, Who continues to speak from the Bark of Peter. Jesus is the **Mystery of God**: His entire earthly sojourn was anointed for the revelation of God Himself and fulfillment of the Divine Plan. Thus, Jesus is the **Sacrament of the invisible Father**.

So as the Persons of the Trinity proceed within God as a Dialogue of Truth and Goodness, so the Church burst forth from the side of Jesus Christ to communicate the infinite riches of this opened Tabernacle of the Trinity. The

Church, therefore, is the **Sacrament** of Jesus Christ, which is established to continue the service of Christ, in the economy of salvation. As Redemption was achieved principally through the Paschal Mystery, the Church is to exercise the work of salvation by means of sacrifice, the sacraments and faith in the resurrection: ***Jesus was put to death for our sins, and raised to life to justify us*** [cf. Rm 4:25]. The Church has been established through the Trinity, as the instrument and sign of Jesus Christ, and the communicator of this Mystery of Salvation. The sacramentality of the Church is based on the sacramentality of the Incarnation. Within the one Person of Jesus Christ there is a clear distinction between His humanity and divinity, without confusion, though inseparable – in parallel manner, the visible form of the Church is distinct from the divine life communicated through this sacrament of Jesus Christ. For any understanding of the Church, this inspiration from SC 2 will be of inestimable help:

... it is proper for the Church to be at the same time human and divine, visibly endowed with the invisible, fervent in action and at leisure for contemplation, present in this world and yet as a pilgrim – And she is this so that in her what is human might be ordered to the divine and subordinated to it, what is visible to the invisible, action to contemplation...

This work of salvation is that around which the entire liturgical life turns, particularly through Baptism and Eucharist. The Church thus is seen as the font, well-spring of these sacraments – and through these external signs, the Church reflects her existence, as the Sacrament of Jesus Christ.

4. The Church: Sacrament of Christ from the Side of Christ

There is a most intimate union and fidelity between Christ and His Church. The emphasis of the image *sleeping on the Cross* presents Jesus as the New Adam and the Church as the New Eve. The Church is clearly derived from Christ, and **dependent** upon Him. Jesus is the Primordial Sacrament, and the Church is sacrament **derived** from Him. ***Bone of my bone, and flesh of My flesh*** – Adam recognized a fitting likeness to himself – thus the Church is like unto Christ. It is through the open side of the dead Christ that the Church is born – this same humanity that is behind every utterance of His word, and communication of it in His sacraments. The Church is already present from the very beginning of the events of the integral Paschal Mystery. The opening of Christ's side is the supreme moment of His total openness to the Father's Will and Mission for Him. The Eucharist is thus the summit, source and goal of the entire activity of the Church – proclaiming His death until He returns.

The opening of the Sacred Side is the culminating indignity of violence heaped on the dead body of Christ. This is the bonding of soteriology-ecclesiology. Pius XII th noted [in *Mystici Corporis*] that the bursting forth of the blood of Christ abolished the Old Law and established the New – from this generation in His precious blood all are invited to share in the inheritance offered through the Church. This Precious Blood brought new life at the instant of His death – and the generation does not know any human boundary – it is open *for the many, for all*. The Church

needs continuing conversion to better serve as the ['Separated'] Instrument of Jesus for the redemption of the world. There is in this war-time letter of Pius XII the breaking down of all dividing walls – the two might be built up now into One. By His death, His commending His Spirit to His Father, in the Risen Christ there is One Man. The Church is thus opened to all of reconciled humanity – the Gifts of the Spirit are offered to all. Thus, a universal Church is born from the side of Christ - **He obtained with His own blood this church** [cf. Ac 20:28] - **Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her...** [cf. Ep 5:25].

This Church was born of the Cross, and with His **ex-spiration** over all of humanity, was enriched also by the Spirit – the Church is now a worthy instrument to spread the effects of His redemption. SC 5 has been enriched with these sublime insights of Pius XII. There is likewise a Holy Saturday prayer that speaks of *the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church* - meant to be a visible expression of the universal salvific will of God. As His humanity served as His **con-joined** instrument of the Divinity – so, the Church, the total Christ, served as His **separated** instrument – not identified with Christ as in the Eucharistic sense, but one with Him, permeated by Him.

5. St. Irenaeus and St. Augustine

St. Irenaeus was most concerned about presenting **the genuine humanity** of Jesus Christ – and uses the flow of blood from the Crucifixion as proof positive of this sacred humanity. If He had not been born of Mary, then the Church would neither have been born from Him – as it flowed from His side from the humanity that came to Him through Mary. The pierced side of Christ proves His humanity and the fullness of human redemption. The true humanity of Jesus was the instrument of God in the opening up of the universal salvation.

St. Augustine **Ennarratio in Ps 138** was a late addition and to this day, it remains a mystery as to who added the text. The text has two points of focus: the sleeping Adam, **a prefigure of Christ on the Cross**, - and then, the birth of the Church. This text does provide a primarily sacramental interpretation of the image which speaks of the ecclesiological effects of the sacrament, even though the Doctor of Hippo did not emphasize in this text the actual formation of the Church.

While these are interesting points for experts, what is more important for the faithful is the ecclesiology and soteriology of this teaching are in complete harmony. Christ has healed by His Precious Blood shed through His obedience, the disobedience of the First Adam. The Church, born on the Cross, continues to exercise the accomplished work of Salvation.

B. LG 3

... The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus [cf. Jn 19:34] and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: *And if I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself...* [cf. Jn 12:32].

Presentation:

The Blood and water were early seen to be the sacraments. They do indeed signify the death of Christ – and simultaneously, they imply the giving of the Holy Spirit as a result of the death of Jesus: *into Your hands I commend My Spirit* - and He *ex-spired!*

1. First Meaning of the Blood and Water: the Death of Jesus Christ

All the activities of the terrestrial Christ reached their culmination in His Passion and Death. All of His earthly undertakings were geared to this climactic moment - *He was obedient unto death* [Ps 2:5, ff.]. His death overturned Adam's disobedience [cf. Rm 5:19]. The father's will was to restore all things in Jesus Christ [cf. Ep 1:10]. Christ inaugurated the Reign of Heaven on earth. The death of Jesus is given the universal salvific meaning through Jn 12:32: being raised up, Jesus will draw **all**. The death of Jesus is the culmination of the prophetic designation of God's plan to transfuse new life, and to lift all human beings up to the Father. In Jesus' words, *all is perfected*, this was fulfilled. It is through the culminating death of Jesus that the Sacraments have come to us and the Church was consecrated – the Scriptures are opened [CCC # 112] and the Gates of Paradise are unlocked.

2. The Second Meaning of the Blood and Water: the *ex-sp*iration of the Spirit

As an image, the open side reveals to us the external elements, the sacraments - as well as the Church's internal elements, as the Headship of Christ and His activity through the Church. These matters pertain to the mystery, and need to be contemplated. The role of the Holy Spirit comes to the fore here: Who is active in the Liturgy, through the sacramental signs – but, of course, this does not limit the role of the Spirit.

From the Cross, many of the Church Fathers could understand that the Church receives new life, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit Himself joining the Church to Himself as one body – in a sense, the Church is the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit. With Jn 7:38 in mind: *from His breast shall flow streams of salvation* [cf. Is 12:1, ff.]. Water often represents the Holy Spirit - thus, the flow of water from the side of Christ is a fulfillment of Jesus' own prophecy [*all will come to the Father when He is raised up*] and a symbol of the Holy Spirit. This will be made more explicit a few lines beyond the revelation of the open side: *Jesus gave up His Spirit* [19:30].

The death of Christ is verified by the blood and water flowing from His side on the Cross – paradoxically, both the blood and the water signify new life in the Holy

Spirit. Thus, the very visible blood and water are likewise symbols of that internal, invisible ecclesial reality resulting from Christ as the Head of the Church – as these two elements together represent the Holy Spirit, Who comes as a result of Christ's death, who will not leave us orphans. This Spirit of life, or the streams of salvation, springs up to life eternal [cf. Jn 7:38, f.]. So, Jesus has acquired the Church through His Blood and has filled her with his Spirit – Christ indeed instituted the New Covenant in His Blood [cf. 1 Co 11:25], calling on the Holy Spirit in its celebration. Thus the Blood of Christ here is both an eloquent soteriological and pneumatological sign. There is a causal connection between the shedding of Christ's Blood on the Cross and His sending out His Holy Spirit, to raise up all to the Father.

3. The Beginning of the Church

A variety of images are noted, as has already been seen, regarding the at least stages of the birth of the one Church: preaching, Mary, the Eucharist, Calvary and Pentecost. It is sometimes said that the Church 'began' in the pen side, and sometimes said that Christ began the Church preaching the good news. Thus, the Church's origins and essential attributes are more extended than any one activity in the life of Jesus.

Some begin further back, with the universal salvific will alive within the Trinity, eternally disposed for dialogue, sharing, communicating. In this sense, the Church began from all eternity in the bosom of the Trinity. From before the constitution of the world, the Divine Plan of Mercy and Love was the motivating force even of creation. The dispersion brought by sin was countered in the divine heart, flowing from the unity of three Persons in one God, by offering a Communion that would one day be eternal. God did this by choosing individuals, groups and then a single nation. In all these 'founding' prophecies, God is at work binding human beings together and to Himself. the people hopelessly lost in the desert were already the 'chosen', the 'called', the beginnings of the Church. In His Blood God called all nations to be one people in His blood [cf. 1 Co 11:25]. Jesus is constituted the Teacher, King, and Priest of humanity, Head of the New People of God. It was called by different titles: the *New Israel*, the *Church of Christ*, the *Body of Christ*.

In this composite 'birth' of the Church there are major sages as noted above – the Church began by His preaching the Good News – that was able to begin, because Mary pronounced her *fiat* in which she persevered all through His earthly sojourn, even to Calvary – as the Church is from the Eucharist, and consecrated the Eucharist, Holy Thursday Night at the Last Supper, was another important milestone – as was the opening of the Tabernacle of the Trinity on Calvary – and the New Life of Pentecost.

The salvific Mission of Christ was then commissioned by Him to the Apostles, and then to the second generation Church after His resurrection and the Descent of the Holy Spirit. Among these many stages of development, the opening of the side of Christ was among the more efficacious and the more dramatic, due to the infinity of love and mercy he expressed in His oblation of Obedience all the way to the

Cross. The Church, the **Spouse of the Lamb**, was so loved by Christ that He gave up His life for her. The Reign of God is present in mystery in the Church, that was begun as the fulfillment of the Father's universal will of salvation.

So, to the question: when was the Church 'born'? – there is no quick answer! In a most unique sense, Mary was with the Church from the beginning – which seems to be one of the requisites for early election of the first successor to the Apostles [cf. Ac 1:26]. Nonetheless, the rich imagery contained in the mystery of the Open Side of Christ is a very significant stage, also because of all that is implied in it and derived from it. In the Plan of the Father, there is great emphasis placed on the Person and Mission of Jesus Christ. His human nature, con-joined to His divinity, served as a significant instrument of the Father's Plan. His death transformed into new life the People of God, dead in their sins. His death and resurrection redeemed, justified the world. And this has been achieved by a New Covenant of Mercy in His Blood - this new alliance between God and humanity.

The forming of this New People and the sending out His Spirit of Life are both associated with the shedding of His precious Blood – in His being raised up, He draws all to Himself. He has given Himself as a ransom for all [cf. 1 Tm 2:4]. This 'New' life in the Church is evident in her dynamism. It is a Pilgrim People of God – she manifests both change and growth.

4. **The Growth of the Church**

Remembering the 'marks of the Church', the Church is already **holy** – but needs to be purified until the end of time. The Spirit is her interior force enabling human beings to love and serve the Lord in a persevering manner. Her essential holiness needs to be intensified by on-going conversion, formation. We are invited to follow in the footsteps of Christ as long as life lasts – or, with the image of Hebrews, to get in the life-long Liturgical Procession with the Great High Priest of the Father's Mercy leading all to the Heavenly Holy of Holies for all eternity. The Church is Holy in her Founder, her message, her sacraments, her goal – but **not yet** in her membership.

The Church is also **one** – yet, the divisions in Christianity are a scandal to all. Pluralism can be an enrichment to theology, but a struggle for charity and unity. The Blood of Christ makes us one in spirit and in truth. There are aspects of this unity which the Church already experiences – but, there is such need for renewal, reform, conversion.

The Church is also **universal, catholic** – yet, John Paul II speaks in *Redemptoris Missio*, on the 25th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II in 1990, as the Church needing Missionaries – since the end of the Council, the number of non-believers has doubled; the number of those preaching the word has been cut in half. We are at the beginning of the Missionary endeavor in the Church. The Church needs to transcend this time and this space, all national boundaries and any ethnic

limitations - so that faith might experience growth in God's Word, by contemplation, study, lived experience and heeding the Magisterium [cf. DV 8].

Thus, the Church is likewise **apostolic**: according to the *Summaries* of Acts: joined in the breaking of the **bread, prayer, charity** and **the teaching of the Apostles** [cf. Ac 2]. As a result, Dynamic Growth manifests both visible and invisible aspects. The Headship of Jesus Christ is alive through the permanent power and presence of the abiding Spirit, all days, even unto the consummation of this world – He moves the Church to on-gong conversion, toward ever greater growth, in order to be a more effective instrument of the trine God. All of the marks of the Church call for continuing growth and intensity: **holiness, unity, universality, apostolicity**.

There is a continuing exhortation to purification, renewal among the members so that the face of Christ might be the less concealed, and the more greatly revealed. In her sacramental life, the Church needs continuing vigilance and encouragement – these are represented on Calvary as blood and water, present at the very foundation of the Church. Even though the blood and water more immediately typify Baptism and Eucharist, as these Sacraments of Initiation, these signs stand also for the sacraments in general. The 'visible organization of the sacraments' refer to the whole visible, perceptible, communal ritual activity of the living of the faith in the essential celebration of these extensions of the Incarnation, these encounters with God, in the Church.

All the sacraments of the Church have been instituted by Jesus Christ – which is the common faith of the Church. Through them, charity toward God and neighbor is communicated, fed and assisted to grow. They offer participation in the means of salvation and the mission of Jesus Christ continued in the Church. Through the sacraments, the worthy recipient is given the realization of the power of the Spirit of God for growth in charity, and a share in the priestly mission of Jesus Christ, making of all of life an oblation to God's mercy.

While all of this is said of the sacraments in General, there is also provided much food for thought in the renewal of each of the sacraments in particular, and the specific role they play in the internal and external growth of the Church.

Special emphasis is always provided to the Eucharist: because of the signs explicitly revealed in the Blood and water, we can readily follow st. Thomas' view that all the other sacraments are ordered to the Eucharist as to their purpose.¹²⁹ In the Eucharist the unity of all believers is both represented and brought about, effected [cf. also 1 Co 10:17]. The faithful are guided by the priests to make of their lives and oblation to the Mercy of God [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] – and to join their daily spiritual sacrifices to the One immolation of Jesus Christ [cf. 1 P 2: 3, ff.]. It is in the Eucharist that the Church is signified, actualized, nourished and grows. Through the Eucharist, Christ joins believers more closely to Himself, and offers them communion in His own

¹²⁹ cf. St. Thomas, III, q. 65, a. 3.

Glorious Life through Eucharistic nourishment – this union and unity is formed, solidified, strengthened, extended, intensified.

So it is, that Jesus' own prophecy [Jn 12:32] that when He would be raised up, He would draw all to Himself predicted a universal effect of His death. All human beings are now afforded the possibility of sharing eternally in the Liturgy of the Great High Priest of Mercy in the celestial Holy of Holies.

Summary

[1] The **Sacraments of the Church** [albeit, with internal effects] are external, visible elements in the Church brought forth in the symbolism of blood and water on Calvary, where Christ's Prophecy is fulfilled [cf. Jn 12:32] when He is raised up, all will be drawn to Him.

[2] The Church's internal elements are also present here, in the revealed Headship of Jesus Christ, and the ever-abiding power and presence of the **Holy Spirit** – we have not been left orphans. These elements are also associated with the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

[3] All of these elements together establish the beginning of the Church.

[4] However, this same complexity is active in the growth of the Church as well through the ages.

[5] Elsewhere [cf. LG 63] Mary, often called the Second Eve, is also described as a Model of the Church – but her presence is not introduced here in connection with Gn 2:24. ff.

[6] The very nature of the extremely rich image of the Sacred Side of Christ is Christocentric and soteriological; it is ecclesial and sacramental.



CORROLARIES

[I] The FIAT of Jesus

JESUS' FIAT = IMMOLATION to HOLY COMMUNION

The Piercing of the Sacred Side

... *Jesus resolutely turned [fixed] His face towards Jerusalem...* [Lk 9:51]

[A] The Transformation of Reconciliation

[1] As we know¹³⁰ from the '**Gospel of Signs**', Jesus could hardly have been blind to the **storm** brewing up, to the force of **contradiction, enmity, rejection**, that was gathering around Him. It was of no less significance for **His walking on toward the Cross with His eyes open** that He lived from the heart of the faith of Israel. He prayed the **prayer** of the Holy People of God [**on His lips as He died!**] – inspired across the ages, **the writings of the Prophets and Sages and Historians**. Their inspired words were deeply **marked by the figure of the righteous man who suffers for the sake of God** – which He endures through faith – not totally unlike our **Man with the Hoe!** Jesus appropriates this prayer which can be seen ever springing anew, with deeper tones, in the **Psalms** and the **Sages**, as well as in the **Sacred Historians** and the **Prophets** – from **Il-Is** and His Suffering Servant – to Job and His own suffering Self. He made this prayer of ancient Israel intimately His own **mind-set** – and **offered His own life to the Cross, in the Gift of His own Self unto death**, thus providing the key that opened up the mystery of this prayer for the ages. **The Immolated Lamb has opened the Scriptures [Rv 5:1, ff.] – as well as the Gate of Heaven.**

[2] In His life-long teaching and preaching, all paths lead into the mystery of the One who proves the Truth of His love and His whole message in suffering. The **words of the Last Supper** provide the final **form**: like **soft cement, needs a solid form to become a side walk to the Father** – so, in Jesus' life, He is **in-formed by His Father's Will** – you and I are **in-formed by His Priesthood, His Cross**: which is at one and the same time the **Throne** of His **Kingship** – the **Altar** of His **Priesthood** – and the **Pulpit** of his lived **Prophecy**, the **Podium** of His **Wisdom** lessons.

[3] The Eucharist is the Memorial of these ancient Truths – the real Presence of His Being among us – and the promise of an everlasting Banquet. For all recipients the Eucharist enlightens our **past** – vivifies our **present** – and instills **hope** into our future. Jesus' Eucharistic words transforms His cruel, unjust death into an act of adoration offered to God and communicated to all who receive Him. His death is not a mere **bitter execution** – the **Carrying out of a sentence**.

¹³⁰ Cf. J. Card. RATZINGER, *God is Near Us*. S. Francisco: Ignatius 2003, pp. 28-31.

[4] In kneeling down to wash His disciples' feet – in taking off His outer garment – in putting the garment back on, returning to table – and Judas went out into the **Night of Denial**: **Jesus re-presents for us what He does with His entire destiny, and what He is from all eternity.** He lays aside any wrapping of splendor and glory, but, transfigures the drab routine of life into **the Splendor of the Truth of His Person and Mission**: He performs a **slave's service** with the **infinite power of a Merciful Lord, washing us clean.** To wash feet prepared one for sitting at the **royal table** so that all can sit down together for a meal with the Lord: ***if you hear me knocking, let me in!*** [Apocalypse] He clothes Himself in the garments of our poverty - so that we might fittingly wear the robes of His glory - He sits at table with an **gathering of sinners**, and leads us through reconciliation to take our place at the **eternal Communion of Saints**, after we have been transformed from sin to grace by His Mercy, **through the assembly of His People at the Eucharistic table**. We are washed through our willingness to yield to His love – God accepts us without pre-conditions other than accepting His grace – **He transforms us into His Brothers, His friends.**

[B] **Conversion through Contemplation**¹³¹

... this is the New Covenant in My blood ... [cf. Jr 31:31].

[1] The prophet predicts **a New Covenant in God's Mercy** no longer limited merely to the **Blood Descendants of Abraham, or Israel**: 'neighbor' is not merely **proximus**, but includes every **alienus**...This **New Love** of God, a **New Commandment** to live the love within the Trinity [... ***as the Father loved Me, as I have loved you!***...] needs **a New Heart** and **a New Spirit**, already promised by Jeremiah and Ezechiel. **The death of Jesus seals this New Covenant, opens up a New Heart, and infuses a new Spirit!**

[2] It signifies something like **a Blood Brotherhood** that had already been part of the prophetic History of Sinai, written on the stones – one day, humanity's stony heart would have **a heart of flesh**, enabling us to glory in our weakness which requires Mercy to be saved, also with St. Paul [cf. 2 Co 12: 9,ff.]. There would be 12 stones assembled around the altar – and the sprinkling of the blood on the Altar [representing God] and the 12 stones, representing all of Israel – the **asperges** with the blood of the Victims would then be sprinkled on the heads of those present, indicating a new **communion of life, a brotherhood in the New and ever-lasting Covenant, unto the remission of sins.**

[3] On Calvary, Jesus institutes a new and true brotherhood, a communion in His Precious Blood with His Father, giving all a share in His unique natural Filiation. The natural complement of Jesus' Death in the infinite power of Mercy – and the fulfillment of His **Sacrifice on Calvary** is **a Holy Communion that will last through all time, and forever**. The Tabernacle Door of the Personified Temple was opened by the thrust of **a pagan Roman lance** – and our hearts, like Mary's soul, have been

¹³¹ J. Card. RATZINGER, *God is Near Us*. S. Francisco: Ignatius 2003, pp. 38-41.

pierced by the Divine Word of Mercy. This is the **Door to new life – the tabernacle of the Trinity – the Gate of a New Heaven and a New Earth.** Jesus accepted a brutal death and makes of it the Doorway to a new life in reconciliation and forgiveness. Jesus died praying – and in this awful abyss He upheld the First Commandment for us! **He asks us to live the second Commandment for Him!**

[4] On the human level, Jesus failed in the first instance: He died nearly abandoned, much ridiculed – He was rejected on account of His preaching. He handled the apparent abandonment of His Father and the full acceptance of His Cross. It is not **the Church of the Successful** that makes up the History of Salvation – the Good Shepherd is most successful with the strays, the lost. **The Church of the Suffering [the 5th Mark of the Church, with: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic?]** gives most credibility to Christ - the **Cross on which He died** becomes the **Tree of Life** through which we all live.

[C] **A 'EUCCHARISTIC COMMUNION OF YEARNING', A SACRAMENT of HOPE**

*... let us look on the One we have pierced ...!*¹³²

[1] There is a kind of 'frame' into which Jn fits his culminating Passion scene: the **washing of the Apostles' feet** [Introduction to what some call the **Gospel of Glory**] – and the **opening of the Sacred Side of Christ** by the Roman soldier. From this **inexhaustible font of living water**, the **streams of abundant salvation** [cf. Is 12:1, ff. – ***Haurietis Aquas*** of Pius XIIth]. This assures the 4th Gospel in being called the **Paschal Gospel of the Immolated Lamb** – with the immolation of the Lambs in the Temple being undertaken that year, Jesus dies at that same Hour – which is His hour, which has dawned. In the opening Jn 1, John the Baptist says Look there is the Lamb of God: ***talya*** could mean servant, son, or Lamb. Hence, Jesus is the **Suffering Servant of God, the Most Beloved Son of God – or, the Sacrificial, Innocent Lamb of God.**

[2] **The Piercing of the Sacred Side** is a **New Creation** story – as in Gen 2: 9, as the first Eve was born from the side of the sleeping first Adam – so now, the Church, comes forth in the blood and water from the sacred side of the New Adam, sleeping in death. This is the beginning of the **New Humanity**. The side is opened in loving sacrifice – this spring of salvific water, like the streams of life in the original Genesis creation story, brings about the **New Creation, the fulfillment of a new history.**

[3] From this **ultimate, Self-giving of Christ** in loving obedience to the Father's Plan for a **New Beginning**, there are poured forth **Baptism and Eucharist**, and new life in the establishment of the **New People of God**. These are the Sacraments

¹³² Cf. Zc 23:10, 14; Jn 19:27; Rv 1:7; J. Card. RATZINGER, ***God is Near Us***. S. Francisco: Ignatius 2003, pp. 42-55.

that initiate the **New Church**. Jesus' significant words at the Last Supper alone would not have suffice for this **New Beginning**. Jesus spoke in anticipation of His death- a dramatic cruelty which He transformed from a bitter, unjust capital punishment, into the **New Justification** in the infinite Mercy of God. This meaningless execution is transformed by love into a **New Code of the Law of Mercy, the New Covenant**. **His love is stronger than death** – as we read in the Song of Songs – love is strong enough to reach out beyond unfairness, injustice, rejection – e enlightens the unknown future with **the New Light of the Nations**.

[4] There a trinity of reality here: **the Divine Word**; the **Suffering and Death of the Second Person of the Trinity in an innocent Human Nature**; and **the Resurrection**. The Christian tradition refers to this as the integral Paschal Mystery: the linking of the **Trinity** to **the Paschal Mystery of the New Creation**. While the Eucharist is indeed a meal – it is a **New Salvific Banquet**, because it cost a death to pay for it. The overcoming all death [that of the body, and that of the soul] is present in the Resurrection – communicated to us each day in the Eucharist. The Eucharist celebrates the death of the Son of God [that places an end to the old world of the past – cf. Rv 21:1, ff.: the world of the past is gone: ***no more death, no more sadness!***] as **the Feast of New Life** for all who approach It with the established conditions. Holidays, festivities can remain sterile entertainment, a commercial enterprise, that might anesthetize a sleeping populace, bereft of dynamic hope – **it may provide what many want, but few of us really need**. The Eucharist is not some kind of religious beautification, a time of Laziness – it has transformed the Sabbath into a **New Day: the Day of the Lord – the Day of Christ – the Day of the Church – the New Day for humanity: this day of Days** [as Pope John Paul II eloquently reminds us in his Apostolic Letter of May 31, 1988, on Keeping Holy the Lord's Day. The **Eucharist sums it all hope: as a real Presence, a Sacrifice, the communication of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross**.

[5] While the gifted philosophers have taught us that in our relationships to God [the **Priesthood is a web of new relationships! – PDC # 12, ff.**] – with **every analogy, there is a greater dissimilarity between us and God, than there is a similarity** – we know far more what God is not than what He is –all our metaphors pale into insignificance, perhaps not far removed from the descriptions of **Jesus Christ, Super-Star: God is a kind sugar-daddy throwing cookies out of heaven for those who are good!** In the Eucharist, the Trinity of Divine Persons, come to us through the Cross of Jesus and His Pierced Side – in Holy Communion, Jesus remains the Principal celebrant of each Mass, bringing to us in Holy Communion, a share in **His eternal self giving**. With **His face fixed toward Jerusalem** – and knowing from His beginning on earth that He **had to** suffer these things and so enter His glory – his call was to live the apocalyptic, prophetic **must: the Son of Man must take up the Cross**: His state of mind that He reveals to us is that **eternally immolation is alive and well as a revelation of agape**! In His resurrected body, He preserved the marks of His wounds, called the **Stigmata** – as the **eternal memorial of His Self giving** for the Church in glory – and for the pilgrim Church, the offering every day of the Holy Mass, as a Loving Memorial of God's self-giving to us for the Church still in Pilgrimage toward the Heavenly sanctuary: ***God so loved the***

World that He gave up His only Son [Rm 8:32] - God so loved the world that He gave up [offered up] His only-begotten Son [Jn 3:16].

[6] This remains our challenge through the years of our priesthood:

21* "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother * shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults * his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell * of fire. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift ... [Mt 5].

Jesus has gone this way before us. The Heavenly Father provided the Lamb of God for the Sacrifice – so that Abraham would not have to give up his only-begotten, most beloved son, Isaac – while the Heavenly Father Himself did offer His only Son. We are now being challenged to offer our sacrifices. The ram in the brambles that Abraham found served as a humble harbinger for the coming Lamb of God – as many of us can serve as a substitute donkey of the **first Palm Sunday** serving to bring God's word to town! As we read in ***Pastores Dabo Vobis, God will provide!*** This is a life-principle! God will take care of us, and our oblation, our personal priestly immolation. The more we trust in Him in the dark night of an **incomprehensible God** [Mary did not understand, but treasured His Word in her heart – Lk 2: 19, 51] – the more will we find His love, and discover Him. Self-giving is the essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice and Communion.

[7] While it is true – and no false humility – we have nothing to offer, being un-productive servants - we are not reduced to passivity, inactivity. With the unknown authors of the Psalms, as Ps 50 and the ***Miserere*** :

5 "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!" 14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,* [EUCCHARIST?] and pay your vows to the Most High; 15 and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." [Ps 50]
15 O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. 16 For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. 17 The sacrifice acceptable to God* is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. [Ps 51]

The priestly hope is: that our contrite prayers ascend to you like the smoke of incense – may our prayers bear more weight than the sacrifice of thousands of unblemished rams! The heart of Israel's worship [and our own!] had always been presented on the altar of the **Memorial** of the Lord.

[8] This is the ever **New Sacrifice** in which we are all a part, all included. **His cruel death has become a proclamation of thanksgiving and love.** Jesus dies

alone, but raises up again, and draws a whole Communion of Saints to be with Him – or, it can be remembered:

The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. 24* Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [Jn 12].

16 I would feed you* with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you." [Ps 81]

14 He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat. [Ps 147]

[9] As the earlier Scriptures remind us: He gathers up in His own Plaintive Liturgical Cry from the Cross the pitiful fragments of our service, our suffering, all our loving, hoping, caring and our waiting into the flood of the Streams of Salvation that flow from His open sacred side By our sharing in His body and Blood, we participate in His one sacrifice:

... 4* Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; 5 and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6* For it stands in scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame." 7* To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," 8* and "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall"; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 9* But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, * that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10* Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. [1 P 2]

[10] He died as a single grain, raises up like with the Full Communion, with all the Saints and the Holy Realities of the Church of Saints: ascending among the Heavenly choirs, as we see in the ICON of San Damiano - **this communion of Holy Things would be the Church's doctrine, her liturgy, her sacraments – and the assembly of her Holy People, once like so many sour grapes, and like dispersed gains of wheat sprinkled over the hills of the New Judea, the New Sion – now gathered in the ciborium of the Church to be offered, consecrated and distributed. In His being **raised up [on the Cross and in the resurrection]** that He accepts us and takes us so that we ourselves become one with Him, in a **Sacramental Identification**, a **Configuration as sharing in His corporate, Uni-Personality, in persona Christi.****

[11] As St. Paul reminded the romans to make of their whole lives an Oblation to God's Mercy, one that is worthy of thinking being [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] our existence is transformed into a Thanksgiving Holocaust, a *rationabile obsequium*, an offering not unlike the **Prophets and **Sages** of old, and the New Creation and**

New Exodus Histories are renewed in us all. His death and resurrection transform our lives into His, and configure us as His Priests in His Person.

[12] Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated – no matter how humble the surroundings Christ is wholly and fully present. And in the simplest of circumstances, the whole Church is present in every celebration – not only horizontally [as Rome, USA, ASIA, AFRICA today] – but also VERTICALLY, down through the ages - with the prayerful mention of the Roman Canon Saints, the present Holy Father as well as our own great shepherd and all of them through history. The Eucharist is not just a meeting in the *binomes of totality*, like the Creation of heaven and earth - but it is the celebration of then & now, one of here and there.

[13] **The then Card. Ratzinger**¹³³ spoke of the offering of the spiritual sacrifices of prisoners who had to do without the Eucharist for days on end – they made of **their longing a Eucharistic oblation, the Eucharist of Expectant Hope** - which prepared them to receive the Eucharist in a new way. We are all called **to look on the one we have pierced** [Zc 12:10; Jn 19:37] – **the open door of the Cathedral of His Body, the New Temple of the Most High** [Jn 2]. May no one be shout out of this open door – and may we never shut anyone out of our lives.

[13] **This looking upon His open side - needs to become the description of our inner Christian life, our fundamental mind-set, our basic orientation.** More and more we need the eyes of our hearts and mind turned toward the Mystery of His Life and Person and Mission, in order that as Christ was **in-formed [like the ‘form’ of soft cement] by the Father’s Will,** may our in-formation be the wood of His Cross, the Precious blood of His Heart, and the Holy Body of His Eucharist. **As the Church is a Christological Constellation – Jesus Christ being the center of its gravity –may our Mass, His real presence be our Eucharistic Constellation.** In Our Masses, we receive His way of Life – put on His Mind – and are called to draw more closely to Him – Peter’s failure was to ‘follow at a distance.’

May the Advent season, with its increasing darkness until the shortest day – burst into a new beginning with the birth of Christ: not only His eternal birth in the Trinity – or the memorial of his virginal birth in Nazareth – but, commemorated perhaps by the Third Mass of Christmas: his New Coming to our hearts!

†††

¹³³ Card. RATZINGER, *God is Near Us*. S. Francisco: Ignatius 2003, o.c. pp. 54,ff.

[II] His FACE Fixed TOWARD JERUSALEM

SACRAMENTAL IDENTITY ETERNAL DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP AS SHARED PERSONALITY

...In the beginning was the Word; the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was with God... No one has even seen God; it is God, the only Son, ever at the Father's side, Who has revealed Him... [Jn 1:18]

In sinu patris [Latin Vulgate] - *nel seno del Padre* [Riciotti's Italian version]

51 When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem... [Lk 9].*

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem... [Lk 13].*



John's Prologue¹³⁴

In the Beginning

in the Hebrew Bible the first book [Genesis] is named for these opening words The parallel between Gn and Jn [and 1 JN: show you something from the beginning]. This parallel continues into the next verses, where the themes of creatin and light and darkness are recalled from Gn.

However, in Gn the reference is to the beginning of creation – whereas, here in Jn it refers to that period before creation – it is a designation that is more qualitative than temporal, and involves **the sphere of God**.



In God's presence... [pros ton theon...]:

this is open to two interpretations:

- **with God**: this would mean **accompaniment** as in the next line. However, the Greek *pros* with the accusative usually implies **motion toward** – but, is sometimes used of **accompaniment**. This is possible – even though in Hreek these two words have two different meanings: *eis* usually means **motion towards** while *en* **infers stable localization** – **pre-creation, eternal accompaniment: ... that glory I had**

¹³⁴ Raymond BROWN, *The Gospel of John I-XII* Vol. 29. Anchor Yale Bible [from Doubleday] [paperback] 1966, pp. 4, ff., 17.

with You, Father, before the world existed... [7:29 (... you know Me and where I come from ...), 17: 5 (], before the constitution of this world.

- **motion towards God**: the emphasis here is Jesus' **eternal filial relationship** - the dynamic sense here has very clear dogmatic overtones – and feeds the spirituality of the Church: **Christian Filiation is established by relationship with the Trinity, with the Church, as priestly character.**

2...Thus, the identity of the priest comes from the specific participation in the Priesthood of Christ, in which the one ordained becomes, in the Church and for the Church, a real, living and faithful image of Christ the Priest, "a sacramental representation of Christ, Head and Shepherd".(7) Through consecration, the priest "receives a spiritual 'power' as a gift which is a participation in the authority with which Jesus Christ, through his Spirit, guides the Church".(8) This sacramental identification with the Eternal High Priest specifically inserts the priest into the trinitarian mystery and, through the mystery of Christ, into the ministerial Communion of the Church so as to serve the People of God. [Ministry & Life of Priests, # 2].

...The Christological dimension, like the Trinitarian dimension, springs directly from the sacrament which ontologically configures the priest to Christ the Priest, Master, Sanctifier and Pastor of his People.(14) The faithful who, maintaining their common priesthood, are chosen and become part of the ministerial priesthood are granted an indelible participation in the one and only priesthood of Christ.



Ever at the Father's Side:

literally, this is often translated as **the One Who is in[to] the bosom of the Father**. There is much stressed the dynamic force of the proposition **as indicating an eternal, active and vital relationship**. From other passages in John, it is clear that this is **an eternal dynamism that establishes Jesus as a Person:**

... 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13* No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man... [Jn 3.

... 16* Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he * who sent me. 17* In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true; 18 I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me... [Jn 8].



Constitutional Filiation

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has written an insightful book (***Behold the Pierced One***, San Francisco: Ignatius 1986) in which he presents Christology also from the aspect of Jesus' Prayer:

a. In the Trinity everything is one and the same where there is not the opposition of relationship – this is an old principle (from St. Anselm?) defined by the Council of Lyons (in 1442) in its Decree for the Jacobites (cf. D-S 1330; ***The Catholic Faith***, n. 325). In a certain sense, Jesus' "personality" is **established, made manifest, in his constant communication with His heavenly Father**. Of all of Jesus' titles, those which seem to predominate are: the Christ, the Lord, and "Son". **Jesus' most intimate communion and distinction with/from the Father are clear in His constant "going aside" to pray in solitude, as well as in public**. The Church imitates this in her praying the Creed – the confession of faith is not merely a "shopping list" of articles of faith, but a genuine prayer of adoration, praise and hope. Jesus' "Person" is contained in His prayer.

b. Jesus died – praying: His death was the ultimate commendation of His soul, His existence, unto the Father – by breathing forth His holy spirit. Jesus' last words are eloquent testimony of His devotion, infinite trust, love, for the Father. He had previously groaned: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* But, He concludes His earthly sojourn by commending all of His work, life, Self, to the Father. (cf. Mt 27:50, f.. p.; Rm 12:1, ff., I P 2:4, f.).

c. By his divine power, he has given us all the things we need for life and for true devotion, bringing us to know God Himself... In making these gifts, he has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through all this, we share in the divine nature (cf. 2 P 1:3, ff.). Agreeing, then, that the core of Jesus' own Person is His prayer, the expression, revelation of His relationship to His Father – we need to share in His prayer. There is no other way to be one with Him. All knowledge is a certain union between the knower and the known. The fundamental response of the religious person is always prayer. Christian prayer, though, is unique in that it is entirely based on the Father's Will: ultimately, it is the act of self-giving, surrender to God.

d. Jesus' own summary of Prayer opens with "OUR" Father – sharing in this prayer will always demand communion with all those He loves: forgive US; give US; lead US not into temptation: deliver US from evil. We are in-grafted INTO the body of Christ (cf. Rm 6:1, ff.). It is in prayer that the past is future and the present is simultaneously tradition and hope, preparing us for eternity. History becomes prophecy and presence becomes promise based on sacred memories of the wonders of God extended to His People. We become one with the Trinity in Whom all time is NOW. Jesus' Plan is simply to carry out the Father's Plan for a New Creation, a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Is 51:16; 65:17; 66:12; Rm 8:19 +; Mt 19:28| Rv. 21:1, ff.). In establishing the Church, Christ intends to renew the People of God.

d. In order for faith to develop in the Church, we need to heed the words of the Council:

... The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There us a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through:

- the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51);

- it comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience;

- and it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.

Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her... (cf. DV 8).

f. The heart of the teaching of the Church is that “Jesus is Lord!” He is the true Son of God, and is truly man - Jesus is of Nazareth, of Galilee – the Lord of heaven and earth in the catharsis of the Paschal Mystery. This has become known to the Church which was “let in on” the messianic secret, enabled to listen in on the eternal conversation of the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit.



The Thomistic Doctrine of DIVINE FILIATION *by ADOPTION*

[1] As the culmination of the thoughts that follow, it is more than ever clear that **Spiritual Re-generation** is a two fold: **Christological** and **Christian Anthropological** mystery. This revealed truth is more sure than any one of the theological constructions that lead us to ponder it. The diversity of interpretations shows well the multiplicity of facts, both fragmentary and complementary, of this bond constituted by our **pariticipation in the life of the Son of God**. In the impossibility of embracing them with just a single glance, the student needs to resolve to explore them in a successive, thought-filled manner. What we have is a research that extended thoroughout the entire academic life of St. Thomas Aquinas. What this has given to the Church is now the advantage of providing a **multiplcty of aspects of contemplating this Mystery**, corresponding to the plurality of the verses of Sacred Scripture, which in some way manifest our **Divine Filiation**. This is a further reason for the immense value of the Angelic Doctor’s biblical Commentaries as well in this matter. It is perhaps far more beneficial for most students to study the many biblical contributions that he pondered, knowing precisley the chronology of the

development of his thought. His doctrine is so sublime in this area it is difficult to synthesize it.

[2] Simply on the basis of **the verses cited by St. Thomas** the student is provided with an excellent in-depth consideration of this sublime Mystery:

[a] First of all, our adoptive Filiation is a very certain revealed teaching, an effect and a sign of divine love:

... Think of that love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children, and that is what we are [1 Jn 3:1].

It truly has been given to us ***the power of becoming the children of God*** [cf. Jn 1:12].

God has chosen us in Him, from before the foundation of the world, in order to be holy and immaculate in His presence, in love, predestining us to be for Him the adopted sons through Jesus Christ. For his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of His grace, His free gift to us in the Beloved ... [cf. Ep 1:4-6].

[b] This implies an **imitation of God** according to;

Jr 3:19: ***You call Me: my Father, and would never cease to follow Me.*** Again, in **Ep 5:11:** ***Try, then, to imitate God as children of His that He loves.***

[c] This Divine Filiation belonged already, by personal title to the just of the Former Covenant and even though they had not yet received the Spirit of Adoption, according to

Rm 9:4: ***They are descended from the Patriarchs and from their flesh and blood came Christ who is above all, God forever blessed. Amen!***

Already in ancient times, the people of God were called: ***Israel, My First-Born Son!*** [cf. Ex 4:22].

I have said that you are gods, you are all children of the Most High [cf. Jr 3:19].
They will now be called sons of the Living God [cf. Rm 9:26, Ho 2:1] – all by faith in Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 1:12].

[d] In fact, this great gift depends on the **Incarnation**:

But when the appointed time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, and to enable us to be adopted as sons. [cf. Ga 4:4-6].

And it was only fitting [cf. Heb 2:10] – they are of the same stock and the son of God calls them **brothers**.

Of His plenitude, we have all received, grace for grace [cf. Jn 1:16].

[e] The Gift of the Holy Spirit justifies us in liberating us from the slavery to sin, making us pass through the status of servant to that of sons and heirs of God.

this same Spirit dwells in us as he guage and the pledge of that inheritance of which the sons have the right, according to:

Rm 8:14-17: Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cdry out: Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, we are also heirs as well: heirs of God and conheirs with Chirst, sharing His sufferings so as to share His glory.

And like this text: **The proof that you are sons is that God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of His Son which cries, Abba, Father! And so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if God has made you son, then He has made you heir** [cf. Ga 4: 4-6].

And you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the promise, the pledge of our inheritance which brings freedom for those whom God has taken to be His own [cf. Ep 1:13,f.]

... marking us with His seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, which we carry in our hearts.

Consequently, **Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God** [cf. Rm 8:14]. **This is manifested by the love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit** [cf. Rm 5:5]

– and by peace: **Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called the sons of God** [cf. Mt 5:9]

[f] We become participants in the divine nature:

[cf. 2 P 1:4]: **In making these gifts, He has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through whom you will be able to share in the divine nature and escape the corruption in a world that is sunk in vice.**

The Holy Spirit is the paternal seed [cf. 1 Jn 3:9] by which we come to this New Birth [cf. 1 Jn 5:18; Jn 3:7].

This permits us to accede to the heavenly inheritance, according to Jn 3:3: **Unless one is born anew he cannot see the reign of God.**

- ... **Blessed be God the Father of ur Lord Jesus Christ, Who in His great mercy has given us a New Birth as His sons by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we may have a sure hope, and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled or fade away** [cf. 1 P 1:3]., This is all achieved by Baptism: **it was for no reason except His own compassion that He saved us by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which He has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Savior He did this so that we should be justified by His grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life. This is doctrine you can rely on** [cf. Tt 3:5-7].

[g] Our divine filiation will only expand completely in Glory, according to:

1 Jn 3:2: ... think of the love that the father has lavished upon us by letting us be caleld God's children ... My dear people, we are already the children of God but what

we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He truly is [1 Jn 3: 1, ff.]
 - *we are looking forward to God's glory* [as His children] [cf. Rm 5:2]
 - *We groan, awaiting the adoption of the sons of God* [cf. Rm 8:23].

[h] The Spirit of Christ, in re-generating us, **assimilates** us to the Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God, the First-Born of a multitude of brothers. We also receive a **participated similitude** of His Divine Filiation by Nature:

They are the ones He chose specially long ago and intended to become the Images of His Son, so that His Son might be the eldest of many brothers. He called those He intended for this; those He called, He justified, and with those He justified, He shared His glory. [Rm 8:29].

Our spiritual re-generation differs however from the eternal generation of the Word, in this, that ours is gratuitous, by the grace of adoption and not by nature. **By His own choice, He made us His children** [Jm 1:18]. This is precisely why Scripture says that **He gave the power for us to become the children of God** [cf. Jn 1:12], we have been **made** the sons of God.

[i] Only the Word is **the Only- Begotten, full of grace and truth** [cf. Jn 1:14, 18]. He is the One of whom the Father declares: **You are My Son** [cf. Ps 2:7]. **Most Beloved, Who enjoys My favor** [cf. Mt 3:17] - **He truly is His Son** [cf. 1 Jn 5:20, Vg] - **His own Son** [cf. Rm 1:3; 8:32] and Jesus marks this difference, in saying: **I am going up to My Father and Your Father** [cf. Jn 20:17].

[3] These are the principal citations that St. Thomas took from Scripture according to the sense that he gave to them. Assuredly, their being placed in order might appear somewhat manipulated, artificial, in the measure that this leads to give an approximately similar sense to those affirmations, of which certain ones are repeated with great constancy through the various formats of his work, and to others which intervene preferentially in his **Commentaries** on Scripture. It remains that one might verify that each one of these verses plays its role well and constitutes, either in a modest, or major manner, a genuine stone in the over-all theological edifice. This signals to each the attention of each one the interest to fathom the depths of these aspects that are not taken up in **III Sent., d. 10, q. 2** and **III, q. 23 [Of Adoption as Befitting to Christ]**. There remains much to do in this regard and the **Index Thomisticus** can be of great assistance. The work undertaken on the **participated similitude**, on **Filiation**, on **re-generation**, on **Filial Fear**, has to be **prolonged**, especially in that which concerns **the role of the Holy Spirit**, as the gauge and the pledge of the **filial inheritance** and as the principle of **assimilation to the Divine Son**. Furthermore, the lexicological study of the dialectic between the Johannine title, **Unigenitus**, and the Pauline, **Primogenitus**, would permit an ever deeper emphasis on the so-called **Christological balance**.

[a] **Sons in the Son** would be the title given by Fr. Mersch. the formula has had a great history, in resonance with **the renewal of the Church** notably, which describes it. This title might certainly receive an interpretation conform to the thought of St. Thomas, but it seems that he would have been orientated more

towards an expressions under the form of **assimilation**, and of **conformity**, as is found in Rm 8:29: **Conform to the Image of God**, on the condition of giving its full **ontological** weight.

[b] Although St. Thomas limits it to the degrees of **creation, grace** and **glory**, it can be judged that he would not disavow the discernment of different forms of Divine Filiation, within the very core of the present state of our adoption. The question arises: how does one reconcile, **his careful distinction of grace, the virtues and the Gifts**, with the statements that we become **the children of God by grace** and **the Divine Indwelling by faith, by the Gift of Wisdom**? On the one hand the statement of certain authors for whom our Divine Filiation is 'formally' independent from the Incarnation, finds an admissible support in St. Thomas, in the measure that he holds, in considering it differently, we would obtain nothing less if Some Other of the Divine Persons were incarnate. However, st. Thomas states that the Son, in being Incarnate, we receive this **by similitude to His proper Filiation**.

Without going into the intricacies of whether some other of the Divine Persons might have become Incarnate, there are many aspects of pondering a variety of titles of our own **Adoptive Filiation**. It is clear that the Incarnation has conferred our understanding of **Adoptive Filiation**, confers a **filial character on Grace** and yet, on the other hand, St. Thomas is far from always referring this similitude to it. This may be shown in the usage that he makes of the principle of *causality to the maximum*. Furthermore, one might under the inspiration of some modern theologians [e.g., Fr. Philip of the Trinity], see in the **spiritual regeneration** itself a **participation in the very being generated, the intra-Trinitarian Procession of the Eternal Word**. In other terms, the affirmation according to which there is only a **theopoiesis** in the **huiopoiesis** is susceptible to being seen in the inverse order: the **theopoiesis** would always be a certain **huiopoiesis**.

[c] A certain number of publications have seen the light of day since 1972, treating of our **Divine Filiation** in a rather general manner, or according to other sources than St. Thomas Aquinas. A recent book has given to this a certain typology [at times, rather partial] and constitutes a vibrant plea for a **Filial Morality**. We will present a few thoughts on **Filial Pardon**. Jean Descolos believes that he has indeed found in **Filiation** a founding and organizing concept for moral theology, aroused by Vatican II for our times. According to him, the theme of the **Divine Filiation** constitutes the expression of a **Christocentrism** which would *liberate moral theology*. This work does not lean directly on St. Thomas, but far more so he makes reference to contemporary theologians for his inspiration. He does testify, however, to the actuality of the theme of **Filial Adoption** and alludes to the many benefits that one might hope from its development. The author emphasis [c. 11] the *Filial Dimension of Christian Morality*. He seeks to draw many sources for its portrayal. He mentions conjointly: biblical backing, that of St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as Freudian Psychology and Vatican II! He even proposes to consider **Divine Filiation as that which envelops all of christian morality**. However pertinent this assertion may be, it illustrates in any case how the theme of our divine filiation might be used as the promoter in contributing a renewal to moral theology hoped for by

Vatican II. This present reflection hopes to bring out the fact that St. Thomas can indeed furnish for this a solid and broad base, both traditional and stimulating for anyone who would attempt to ponder this **Mystery of the Divine Son**, in expectantly awaiting its ultimate manifestation in Glory: ***we are already the children of God, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He really is*** [cf. 1 Jn 3:2].

†††

[III] *Perforatio*

DEUS CARITAS EST [## 7, 12, f., 17, 19]

The Pierced One

7, b: ...In philosophical and theological debate, these distinctions have often been radicalized to the point of establishing a clear antithesis between them: **descending, oblativ love—agape**—would be **typically Christian**, while on the other hand **ascending, possessive or covetous love —eros**—would be typical of **non-Christian**, and particularly **Greek** culture. Were this antithesis to be taken to extremes, the essence of Christianity would be detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence, and would become a world apart, admirable perhaps, but decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life. Yet *eros* and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated.

The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized. Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature. On the other hand, **man cannot live by oblativ, descending love alone.** He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. **Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. Jn 7:37-38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. Jn 19:34).**

In the account of Jacob's ladder, the Fathers of the Church saw this inseparable connection between ascending and descending love, between *eros* which seeks God and *agape* which passes on the gift received, symbolized in various ways. In that biblical passage we read how the Patriarch Jacob saw in a dream, above the stone which was his pillow, a ladder reaching up to heaven, on which the **Pope Gregory the Great** angels of God were ascending and descending (cf. *Gen* 28:12; *Jn* 1:51). A particularly striking interpretation of this vision is presented by in his *Pastoral Rule*. He tells us that the good pastor must be rooted in contemplation. Only in this way will he be able to take upon himself the needs of others and make them his own: “*per pietatis viscera in se infirmitatem caeterorum transferat*”.^[4] Saint Gregory speaks in this context of Saint Paul, who was borne aloft to the most exalted mysteries of God, and hence, having descended once more, he was able to become all things to all men (cf. *2 Cor* 12:2-4; *1 Cor* 9:22). He also points to the example of **Moses, who entered the tabernacle time and again, remaining in dialogue with God**, so that when he emerged he could **be at the service of his people**. “Within [the tent] he is borne aloft through contemplation, while without he is

completely engaged in helping those who suffer: *intus in contemplationem rapitur, foris infirmantium negotiis urgetur.*”



12. Though up to now we have been speaking mainly of the Old Testament, nevertheless the profound compenetration of the two Testaments as the one Scripture of the Christian faith has already become evident. The real novelty of the New Testament lies not so much in new ideas as **in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to those concepts**—an unprecedented realism. In the Old Testament, the novelty of the Bible did not consist merely in abstract notions but in God's unpredictable and in some sense unprecedented activity.

This divine activity now takes on dramatic form when, in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the “stray sheep”, a suffering and lost humanity. When Jesus speaks in his parables of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. **By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8).** It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.

13. Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, **his very self, his body and blood as the new manna** (cf. Jn 6:31-33). The ancient world had dimly perceived that man's real food—**what truly nourishes him as man—is ultimately the Logos, eternal wisdom**: this same Logos now truly becomes food for us—as love. The Eucharist draws us into **Jesus' act of self-oblation**. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, **we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving**. The imagery of **marriage between God and Israel** is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but **now it [espousals] becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood**. The sacramental “mysticism”, grounded in God's condescension towards us, operates at a radically different level and lifts us to far greater heights than anything that any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish.



17. True, no one has ever seen God as he is. And yet God is not totally invisible to us; he does not remain completely inaccessible. **God loved us first**, says the **Letter of John** quoted above (cf. 4:10), and this love of God has appeared in our midst. He has become visible in as much as he “has sent his only Son into the world, **so that we might live through him**” (1 Jn 4:9). God has made himself visible: in Jesus we are able to see the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Indeed, God is visible in a number of ways. In

the love-story recounted by the Bible, he comes towards us, he seeks to win our hearts, all the way to the Last Supper, to the piercing of his heart on the Cross, to his appearances after the Resurrection and to the great deeds by which, through the activity of the Apostles, he guided the nascent Church along its path. Nor has the Lord been absent from subsequent Church history: he encounters us ever anew, in the men and women who reflect his presence, in his word, in the sacraments, and **especially in the Eucharist**. In the Church's Liturgy, in her prayer, in the living community of believers, we experience the love of God, we perceive his presence and we thus learn to recognize that presence in our daily lives. He has loved us first and he continues to do so; we too, then, can respond with love. God does not demand of us a feeling which we ourselves are incapable of producing. He loves us, he makes us see and experience his love, and since he has "loved us first", love can also blossom as a response within us.

In the gradual unfolding of this encounter, it is clearly revealed that love is not merely a sentiment. Sentiments come and go. A sentiment can be a marvellous first spark, but it is not the fullness of love. Earlier we spoke of the process of purification and maturation by which *eros* comes fully into its own, becomes love in the full meaning of the word. It is characteristic of mature love that it calls into play all man's potentialities; it engages the whole man, so to speak. Contact with the visible manifestations of God's love can awaken within us a feeling of joy born of the experience of being loved.

But this encounter also engages our will and our intellect. Acknowledgment of the living God is one path towards love, and the "yes" of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all- embracing act of love. But this process is always open-ended; love is never "finished" and complete; throughout life, it changes and matures, and thus remains faithful to itself. ***Idem velle atque idem nolle*** — to want the same thing, and to reject the same thing—was recognized by antiquity as the authentic content of love: the one becomes similar to the other, and this leads to a community of will and thought. The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God's will increasingly coincide: God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself. **Then self- abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy (cf. Ps 73 [72]:23-28).**



**PART II
CARITAS
THE PRACTICE OF LOVE
BY THE CHURCH
AS A “COMMUNITY OF LOVE”**

The Church's charitable activity as a manifestation of Trinitarian love

19. **“If you see charity, you see the Trinity”**, wrote Saint Augustine.^[11] In the foregoing reflections, we have been able to **focus our attention on the Pierced one (cf. Jn 19:37, Zech 12:10), recognizing the plan of the Father who, moved by love (cf. Jn 3:16),** sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem man. By dying on the Cross—as Saint John tells us—Jesus “gave up his Spirit” (Jn 19:30), anticipating the gift of the Holy Spirit that he would make after his Resurrection (cf. Jn 20:22). This was to fulfil **the promise of “rivers of living water” that would flow out of the hearts of believers, through the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Jn 7:38-39).** The Spirit, in fact, is **that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ's heart** and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them, when he bent down to wash the feet of the disciples (cf. Jn 13:1-13) and above all when he gave his life for us (cf. Jn 13:1, 15:13).

The Spirit is also **the energy which transforms the heart of the ecclesial community**, so that it becomes a witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son. The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that **seeks the integral good of man: it seeks his evangelization through Word and Sacrament**, an undertaking that is often heroic in the way it is acted out in history; and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity. **Love is therefore the service** that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs. And this is the aspect, this *service of charity*, on which I want to focus in the second part of the Encyclical.



Conclusion ...

42. The lives of the saints are not limited to their earthly biographies but also include their being and working in God after death. In the saints one thing becomes clear: those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them. In no one do we see this more clearly than in Mary. The words addressed by the crucified Lord to his disciple—to John and through him to all disciples of Jesus: **“Behold, your mother!” (Jn 19:27)—are fulfilled anew in every generation.** Mary has truly become the Mother of all believers. Men and women of every time and place have recourse to her motherly kindness and her virginal purity and grace, in all their needs and aspirations, their joys and sorrows, their moments of loneliness and their common endeavours. They constantly experience the gift of her goodness and the unfailing love which she pours out from the depths of her heart. The testimonials

of gratitude, offered to her from every continent and culture, are a recognition of that pure love which is not self- seeking but simply benevolent.

At the same time, the devotion of the faithful shows an infallible intuition of how such love is possible: it becomes so as a result of the most intimate union with God, through which the soul is totally pervaded by him—**a condition which enables those who have drunk from the fountain of God's love to become in their turn a fountain from which “flow rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38).** Mary, Virgin and Mother, **shows us what love is and whence it draws its origin and its constantly renewed power.** To her we entrust the Church and her mission in the service of love:

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you have given the world its true light,
Jesus, your Son – the Son of God.
You abandoned yourself completely
to God's call
and thus became a wellspring
of the goodness which flows forth from him.
Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become
capable of true love
and be fountains of living water
in the midst of a thirsting world.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 25 December, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, in the year 2005, the first of my Pontificate.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

