

# THE STIGMATA OF JESUS CHRIST

## with Liturgical 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

Vol. II:

AN AUTUMNAL LITURGY OF WATER

Rev. Joseph HENCHEY, CSS

2008

***... one of the soldiers pierced His side, and immediately there came out BLOOD and WATER ... [Jn 19:34]***

***... there are three witnesses: the Spirit, WATER and BLOOD... [1 Jn 5:6, ff.]***

**... 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]**

†

†††

†

**TABLE of CONTENTS**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Preface</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Foreword</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Holy Saturday – Liturgy of Baptism</b>                                     | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Bibliography</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <b>The Byzantine Blessing of Water</b>  | <b>12</b> |
| <b>A Contemplation concerning Jesus from Hebrews [St. Thomas' Commentary]</b> | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Introduction</b>   | <b>21</b> |



|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| <b>PART ONE</b> | <b>22</b> |
|-----------------|-----------|

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>I. FAITHFUL CONTEMPLATION OF THE 'PIERCED ONE' [Jn 19:37] -</b> | <b>22</b> |
| <b><u>OBLATION TO GOD's MERCY [cf. Rm 12:1]</u></b>                |           |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Presentation</b>  | <b>22</b> |
| <b>A. Themes implied in Jn 19:37</b>                             | <b>23</b> |
| 1. Zc 12:10  |           |
| 2. Johannine Themes  |           |
| <b>B. Context of Jn 19:37</b>                                    | <b>28</b> |
| 1. Where is the 'Look' directed?                                 |           |
| 2. They will look on the One they have pierced                   |           |
| <b>C. Prolongation of the theme</b>                              | <b>32</b> |
| 1. Eschatological Dimensions                                     |           |
| 2. Ecclesial   |           |
| <b>Conclusion</b>  |           |
| <b>D. Mary Treasured These Things In Her Heart [Lk 2:19, 51]</b> | <b>35</b> |
| <b>Introduction</b>  |           |
| 1. The Texts [Lk 2: 19, 51]                                      |           |
| 2. OT Background [ Gn 37:7, ff.; Dn 4: 1, ff.; 7:1-14 ]          |           |
| 3. Bethlehem text [Lk 1:19]                                      |           |
| 4. Basis for "Heart of Mary" Devotion [St. John Eudes]           |           |



|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>II. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</b> | <b>45</b> |
|--|-----------|

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction: OT Survey of Texts</b> | <b>45</b> |
| <b>Brief History</b>                    | <b>49</b> |
| <b>A. Redemptive Creation</b>           | <b>51</b> |
| <b>Presentation</b>                     | <b>51</b> |
| 1. Water and Life                       | <b>54</b> |

|       |   |     |
|-------|---|-----|
| I.)   | Water in the Creation Stories                   | 54  |
| II.)  | Divine Master over the Waters                   | 63  |
| III.) | Two Effects of Living Water                     | 65  |
|       | a.) The Source of Life                          | 65  |
|       | 1. Principle of Life                            |     |
|       | 2. Principle of New Life                        |     |
|       | 3. Sign of Abundant Life                        |     |
|       | b.) Water that Cleanses                         | 67  |
|       | 1. Miserere                                     |     |
|       | 2. NT Washing                                   |     |
|       | Summary   | 68  |
|       | IV.) The Autumn Liturgy of Water                | 72  |
| 2.    | The Source of Living Waters                     | 76  |
|       | I.) The Creator                                 | 76  |
|       | II.) The Spirit                                 | 77  |
|       | Summary   | 79  |
| 3.    | The Living Waters Restore Creation              | 80  |
| B.    | Johannine Connection                            | 82  |
|       | Introduction                                    | 83  |
|       | 1. Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:1-12)                  | 84  |
|       | 2. The Woman of Samaria (Jn 4:1, ff.)           | 86  |
|       | 3. The Bread of Life (Jn 6:35)                  | 91  |
|       | 4. The Discourse for Tabernacles (Jn 7:37-39)   | 93  |
|       | †††   |     |
|       | <b><u>PART TWO</u></b>                          | 100 |
|       | I. FEAST of HUTS – TABERNACLES – <i>SUKKOTH</i> | 100 |
| A.    | Tabernacles in the Hebrew Scriptures            | 100 |
| B.    | Tabernacles in Jn's Gospel                      | 104 |
| C.    | Tabernacles in the Apocalypse                   | 108 |
|       | †   |     |
|       | II. STREAMS OF SALVATION                        | 128 |
|       | Presentation:                                   | 128 |
|       | [1] Liturgy                                     |     |
|       | [2] Varied Catechesis                           |     |
|       | [3] St. John [4:10-14; 7:37-39]                 |     |

|           |  |            |
|-----------|--|------------|
| <b>A.</b> | <b>The Gift of Living Water</b>                  | <b>131</b> |
|           | [I]     The Samaritan Woman                      |            |
|           | [II]    Feast of Tabernacles                     |            |
| <b>B.</b> | <b>The Striking of the Rock and Jesus Christ</b> | <b>135</b> |
| <b>C.</b> | <b>The Theology behind ‘Living Water’</b>        | <b>141</b> |
| <b>D.</b> | <b>The Paschal Activity of the Holy Spirit</b>   | <b>145</b> |



|             |  |            |
|-------------|--|------------|
| <b>III.</b> | <b>THE SYMBOLISM OF THE BLOOD AND WATER<br/>FROM THE PIERCED SIDE OF JESUS CHRIST [Jn 19:34]</b> | <b>148</b> |
|             | <b>Presentation</b>  | <b>148</b> |
| <b>1.</b>   | <b>Data from the History of Exegesis of Jn 19:34</b>   | <b>149</b> |
| <b>2.</b>   | <b>Problems &amp; Challenges</b>   | <b>153</b> |
|             | a.     Exegetical  |            |
|             | b.     Theological   |            |
| <b>3.</b>   | <b>Symbolic Value and Theological Interpretation of the Blood and Water</b>                      | <b>158</b> |
|             | a.     The Co-relation of Themes in the Structure of Jn 19:28-37                                 |            |
|             | b.     Symbolic Value of the Blood and Water   |            |
|             | c.     Christological Interpretation of the Symbolism  |            |
|             | <b>Conclusions</b>   | <b>167</b> |
|             | <b>Finale</b>  | <b>175</b> |



|            |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| <b>IV.</b> | <b>LITURGY of FORGIVENESS [Jn 20:19-23] –<br/>Christophany and Gift of the Spirit</b> | <b>176</b> |
|            | <b>Presentation: New Epiphany</b>   | <b>176</b> |
| <b>A.</b>  | <b>Jesus shows Himself to His Disciples [vv.19-20]: <u>Christophany</u></b>           | <b>179</b> |
|            | [I]     Jesus enters [v. 19]  | <b>179</b> |
|            | [II]    Jesus’ Gesture: Manifestation of Glorious Stigmata [v. 20]                    | <b>186</b> |
|            | [III]   Disciples’ Reaction [v. 20 b] – Paschal Faith                                 | <b>189</b> |
| <b>B.</b>  | <b>The Gift of the Spirit [vv. 21-23]</b>   | <b>191</b> |
|            | [I]     Jesus’ Greeting [PEACE] – Apostolic Mission [v. 21]                           | <b>191</b> |
|            | [II]    Jesus’ Gesture [BREATH] - The Gift of the Spirit [v. 22]                      | <b>194</b> |
|            | [III]   REMISSION OF SINS [v. 23]   | <b>199</b> |
|            | <b>CONCLUSIONS</b>  | <b>205</b> |



## 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.<sup>1</sup>

In one of his great encyclicals, Pope Pius XII commented on **the Wounded Side** in connection with the love of Jesus for God the Father<sup>2</sup> - 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.

**Joseph Henchey, C.S.S.**

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> cfr. Rafael Criado, SJ. “Los Simbolos del Amor divino en el Antigo Testamento”, in ***Cor Jesus: Commentationes in Litteras Enciclicas ‘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 those who have pierced Him ... [Rv 1:7].**

†††

## HOLY SATURDAY LITURGY OF BAPTISM

### Blessing

**O God who by invisible power accomplish a wondrous effect through sacramental signs – and who in many ways have prepared water, your creation, to show forth the grace of Baptism.**

**O God whose Spirit in the first moments of creation, hovered over the waters, so that the very substance of water would even then take to itself the power of sanctifying.**

**O God who by the outpouring of the flood, foreshadowed regeneration, so that from the mystery of one and the same element of water would come an end to vice and a beginning of virtue...**

**O God who caused the children of Abraham to pass dry-shod through the red sea, so that the chosen people, set free from slavery to Pharaoh, would prefigure the People of the Baptized...**

**O God, whose Son, baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan, was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and, as he hung upon the Cross, gave forth water from his side along with blood, and after his Resurrection, commanded all his disciples: 'Go forth, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' – look now, we pray upon the face of your Church and graciously unseal for her the fountain of Baptism.**

**May this water receive by the Holy Spirit, the grace of your Only Begotten Son, so that human nature, created in your image and washed clean through the Sacrament of Baptism from all the squalor of the life of old, may be found worthy to rise to the life of newborn children through water in the Holy Spirit.**

**May the power of the Holy Spirit, O Lord, we pray, come down through your**

**Son into the fullness of this font, so that all who have been buried with Christ, by Baptism unto death, may rise again to life with him. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.**

†

†††

†



### **Brief Bibliography**

**[Commentaries on: Is 53; Zc 12-13; Ho 6; Lk's Passion Narratives; Jn 19-20]**

**St. Augustine, Commentary on Gospel of John in: *Select Library of the Christian Church. Nice and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 7. First Series. Reprint: Hendrickson Publishers.**

**St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentarium in Joannem***

†

**Pius XIth, *Quas Primas*. Encyclical Letter on the Feast of Christ the King. December 11, 1925, Holy Year.**

**---- *The Sacred Heart and World Distress*. Encyclical Letter May 3, 1932.**

**Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas: On Devotion to the Sacred Heart*. Encyclical Letter May 15, 1956.**

†

**BROWN, Raymond, *The Gospel According to John*. Anchor Bible. Doubleday  
John 1-12 – Volume 29  
John 13-21 – Vol. 29 A**

**- *The Death of the Messiah* 2 Volumes - Doubleday.**

**CARMINATI, SCJ, *E' venuto nell'acqua e nel sangue. Riflessione biblico-Patristica*. Bologna: EDB 1976**

**De La POTTERIE, SJ, Ignace, *Il mistero del cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici Della spiritualita' del Cuore di Gesu' . Studi Biblici*. Bologna: EDB 1988.**

**GREEN, Joel B. & Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross. Atonement in NT & Contemporary Contexts*. Downers Grove IL Inter Varsity Press 2000.**

**LEWIS, Alan E., *Between Cross and Resurrection. A Theology of Holy Saturday*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans 2001.**

**VonBALTHASAR, Hans Urs, *Mysterium Paschale. The Mystery of Easter*. San Francisco Ignatius 1983 [Translated: Aidan NICHOLS OP]**

†††

**Brief Bibliography of The Cross  
[repeat]**

**AN INTRODUCTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY  
THE WISDOM AND THE POWER OF THE CROSS**

**A. IN GENERAL**

**Vangelo della Passione. Schede Bibliografiche. Pescara-Fontanelle:**  
Centro Stauros Francesco Crescenzi:  
Prima Series, 1975-1980, nn 1-551  
Seconda Series, 1981, nn 1 ff.

**B. A CONGRESS ON THE CROSS**

**La Sapienza della Croce Oggi. Atti del Congresso Internazionale. Roma**  
13/18 October 1975. Torino: LDC 1976  
Vol. 1: La Sapienza della Croce nella Rivelazione e nell'Ecumenismo  
Vol. 2: La Sapienza della Croce nella Spiritualita'  
Vol. 3: La Sapienza della Croce nella cultura e nella Pastorale

**C. BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS**

**FORESTELL, J. Terence, *The Word of the Cross. Salvation as Revelation in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel*. AnBib. Rome: Biblicum 1974**  
**KELBER, Werner, H. (ed.), *The Passion in Mark. Studies on Mk 14-16*. Philadelphia: Fortress 1976**  
**LACOMARA, CP, Aelred, (ed.). *The Language of the Cross*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press 1977**  
**MORRIS, Leon, *The Cross in the NT*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, Reprinted 1980**  
**RUEDI-WEBER, Hans, *The Cross. Tradition and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1978**  
**TAYLOR, Vincent, *The Passion Narrative of St. Luke*. Cambridge University Press 1972.**

**D. RECENT MAGISTERIUM**

**JOHN PAUL II, *Salvific Doloris*, Apostolic Letter, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering. February 11, 1984**  
**VEGLIANTI, C.PP.S., Tullio, *La Croce di Cristo, salvezza dell'uomo, secondo le Costituzioni del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II*: SC, LG, GS. (Tesi di laurea, alla Gregoriana. Roma 1983)**

**E. DOGMATIC THEOLOGY**

**FLICK, SJ, M – ALSZEGHY, SJ, Z., *Il mistero della Croce. Saggio di Teologia Sistemica*. Brescia: Queriniana 1978**  
**JOHRI, Mauro, *Descensus Dei. Teologia della Croce nell'opera di Hans URS VON BALTHASAR*. Roma: Lateranense 1981**  
**LIPPI, CP, Adolfo, *Teologia della Gloria e Teologia della Croce*. Torino: LDC 1982**  
**O'COLLINS, G., FARICY, SJ, R., FLICK, SJ, M., *The Cross Today. An***

***Evaluation on Current Theological Reflections on the Cross of Christ.***

Rome/Sydney: Dwyer 1977

O'COLLINS – Gerald, *The Calvary Christ*. London: SCM 1977RICHARD, L. *Le mystere de la Redemption*. Desclee 1959**F. SPIRITUALITY**BROVETTO, CP, Costante, *La Sapienza della Croce*. Centro Studi Stampa  
Passionista 1984CHARDON, OP. Louis, *The Cross of Jesus* 2 Volumes. St. Louis Herder 19959GARRIGOU-LANGRANGE, OP, Reginald, *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus*.  
St. Louis: Herder 1947 (2 Volumes)GIARDINI, OP, Fabio, *Progress and the Cross. Personal Self-Realization and  
Christian Denial in the Modern World* (pro manuscripto): Roma:  
Angelicum 1977**G. ECUMENICAL REFLECTIONS**DELMIRANI, Mario, *Croce e speranza. Introduzione alla teologia alla teologia di  
Jurgen Moltmann*. Bari: Ed. Del Circito 1976MOLTMANN, Jurgen, *The Crucified God*. London: SCM 1974Von LOEWENICH W., *Teologia Crucis. Visione teologica di Lutero in  
Una prospettiva ecumenica*. Bologna: EDB 1975WEEKS, SJ, Jared, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*. Wilmington: Glazier 1983WELKER, Michael (ed.), *Dibattito su 'Il Dio crocifisso' di Jurgen Moltmann*.  
Brescia: Queriniana: GDT 136, 1982**H. "SUFFERING IN GOD"**GALOT, SJ, Jean, *Il mistero della sofferenza di Dio*, Assisi: Cittadella 1975MOLTMANN, Jurgen, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. San Francisco: Harper and Row  
1981VARILLON, Francois, *The Humility and Suffering of God*.  
Staten Island, NY: Alba House 1983  
(A critique)NICHOLAS, OP, Jean-Herve', "La contemplation et la Croix", in: *Contemplation et vie  
Contemplative en christianisme* Paris: Beauchesne/Fribourg 1980, pp 158-188**I. THE CROSS AND PHILOSOPHY**BRETON, CP, Stanislas, *La passione di Cristo e le filosofie*.  
Pescara: Stauros 1982- Id., *Il Verbo e la Croce*. Pescara: Stauros 1983.

## THE BYZANTINE BLESSING OF WATER

The voice of the Lord upon the waters cries aloud saying: "Come you all, and receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, from Christ who is made manifest."

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified, and the Jordan is parted in two; it holds back the stream of its own waters, seeing the Master being baptized.

O Christ the King, You came to the river as a man, and in your goodness You made haste to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner, for the sake of our sins, O Lover of mankind! (Glory be...)

At the voice of tone crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" You came, O Lord, taking the form of a servant, and You who knows no sin does ask for baptism. The waters saw You and were afraid; the Forerunner was seized with trembling and cried aloud, saying: "How shall the lamp illuminate the Light? How shall the servant set his hand upon the Master? O Savior who takes away the sin of the world, sanctify both me and the waters."

(A reading from Isaiah and the Epistle of the holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians as well as a Gospel reading which I won't write in here - this all follows the Mass at which there were other readings).

There are then various prayers over the water:

That this water may be sanctified by the might and operation and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

That the cleansing operation of the Trinity supreme in being may come down upon these waters, let us pray to the Lord.

That these waters may be given the grace of redemption and the blessing of the Jordan by the power and operation and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray...

That Satan may be swiftly crushed beneath our feet, and that every counsel that is directed against us by the Evil One may be made of no effect, let us pray...

That he will deliver us from every attack and temptation of the Adversary, and make us worthy of the good things that are promised, let us pray...

That we may be enlightened by the light of knowledge, and godliness through the descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray...

That this water may become a gift of sanctification, a remission of sins, for the healing of soul and body, and for every purpose that is expedient, let us pray...

That this water may become a fountain springing unto eternal life, let us pray...

That this water may serve to the averting of every evil purpose of enemies visible and invisible, let us pray...

For those who draw from this water and take it for the sanctification of their homes, let us pray...

That this water may bestow cleansing of soul and body upon all who draw it with faith and partake of it, let us pray...

**From our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, and need, let us pray...**

**As we remember our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God, and ever-virgin Mary together with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ God. (Response- To You, O Lord.)**

**O Trinity, supreme in being, in goodness, and in Godhead, almighty, who watch over all, invisible, incomprehensible, Maker of spiritual beings and rational natures, innate Goodness, Light that none can approach that lightens every man that comes into the world: Shine also upon me your unworthy servant. Enlighten the eyes of my understanding that I may make bold to sing the praises of your measureless beneficence and your might. May the prayer be acceptable that I offer for the people here present. Let not my faults hinder your Holy Spirit from coming to this place, but suffer me now uncondemned to cry to You, O most good Lord, and to say:**

**We glorify You, O Master who loves mankind, almighty, pre-eternal Kind. We Glorify you, the Creator and Maker of all. We glorify you, O Only-begotten Son of God, born without Father from you Mother, and without mother from your Father. In the preceding feast we saw you as a child, while in the present we behold You full-grown, our God made manifest, perfect God from perfect God. For today the time of the feast is at hand for us: the choir of saints assembles with us and angels join with men in keeping festival.**

**Today the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form a dove descended upon the waters. Today the Sun that never sets has risen and the world is filled with splendor by the light of the Lord. Today the moon shines upon the world with the brightness of its rays. Today the glittering stars make the inhabited earth fair with the radiance of their shining. Today the clouds drop down upon mankind the dew of righteousness from on high. Today the uncreated of his own will accepts the laying on of hands from his own creature. Today the prophet and Forerunner approaches the Master, but stands before him with trembling, seeing the condescension of God towards us. Today the waters of the Jordan are transformed into healing by the coming of the Lord. Today the whole creation is watered by mystical streams. Today the transgressions of men are washed away by the waters of the Jordan. Today paradise has been opened to men and the Sun of Righteousness shines down upon us. Today the bitter water, as once with Moses, is changed to sweetness by the coming of the Lord. Today we have been released from our ancient lamentation, and as the new Israel we have found salvation. Today we have been delivered from darkness and illuminated with the light of the**

knowledge of God. Today the blinding mist of the world is dispersed by the appearance of our God. Today the whole creation shines with light from on high. Today error is laid low and the coming of the Master has made for us a way of salvation. Today things above keep feast with things below, and things below commune with things above. Today the triumphant assembly of the orthodox keep this holy festival with great joy. Today the Master hastens towards baptism that he may lift man up to the heights. Today he that bows not, bows down to his own servant, that he may set us free from bondage. Today we have purchased the kingdom of heaven, for the Lord's kingdom shall have no end. Today earth and sea share the joy of the world, and the world is filled with gladness.

The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You and were afraid. The Jordan turned back, seeing the fire of the Godhead descending bodily and entering its stream. The Jordan turned back, beholding the Holy Spirit coming down in the form of a dove and flying about You. The Jordan turned back, seeing the invisible made visible, the Creator made flesh, the Maker in the form of a servant. The Jordan turned back and the mountains skipped, looking upon God in the flesh; and the clouds gave voice, marvelling at Him who was come, the Light of Light, true God of true God. For today in the Jordan they saw the triumph of the Master, they saw Him drown in the Jordan the death of disobedience, the sting of error, and the chains of hell, and bestow upon the world the baptism of Salvation.

Therefore, sinner and unworthy servant though I am, I recount the majesty of Your wonders, and seized with fear, in compunction I cry aloud to You:  
(the priest takes lighted candles and makes a sign of the cross with them over the water three times, immerses them into the water, and says in a loud voice:)

**GREAT ARE YOU, O LORD, AND MERVELLOUS ARE YOUR WORKS; NO WORDS SUFFICE TO SING  
THE PRAISES OF YOUR WONDERS ( said THREE TIMES).**

For You by your own will have brought all things out of nothingness into being, by your power You do hold together creation, and by your providence You govern the world. Of four elements You have compounded the creation, with four seasons You have crowned the circuit of the year. All the spiritual powers tremble before You. The sun sings your praise, the moon glorifies you, the stars supplicate before You, the light obeys You, the deeps are afraid at your presence, the fountains are your servants. You have stretched out the heavens like a curtain, You have established the earth upon the waters, You have walled about the sea with sand. You have poured forth the air that living things may breathe. The angelic powers minister to You, the choirs of archangels worship You, the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim, standing around You and flying about You, hide their faces in fear of your unapproachable glory. You, the uncircumscribed God without beginning and beyond speech, have come upon earth, taking the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of man. For

**You, O Master, in your merciful compassion could not bear to see mankind beneath the tyranny of the devil, but You came and saved us. We confess your beneficence. You have set free the offspring of our kind. You have hallowed a virgin womb by your nativity. At Your Epiphany, the whole creation sang your praises. For You, our God, have appeared on earth and dwelt among men, You have sanctified the streams of Jordan, sending down from on high the most Holy Spirit, and You have broken the heads of the dragons hidden therein.**

(The priest now says the following verse three times, and each time he says it, he blows upon the water in the form of a cross:)

**THEREFORE, O KING AND LOVER OF MANKIND, YOU YOURSELF BE PRESENT NOW AS THEN THROUGH THE DESCENT OF YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, AND SANCTIFY THIS WATER.**

**And confer upon it the grace of redemption, the blessing of the Jordan. Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a remission of sins, a protections against disease, a destruction to demons, inaccessible to the adverse powers and filled with angelic strength, that all who draw from it and partake of it may have it for the cleansing of their soul and body, for the healing of their passions, for the sanctification of their homes, and for every purpose that is expedient. For you are our God, who has renewed through water and Spirit, our nature grown old through sin. You are our God, who has drowned sin through water in the days of Noah. You are our God who, through the waters of the sea, at Moses' hand has set free the Hebrew nation from the bondage of Pharaoh.**

**You are our God who has cleft the rock in the wilderness, the waters gushed out, the streams overflowed, and you have satisfied your thirsty people. You are our God who by water and fire through Elijah has brough back Israel from the error of Baal.**

(While blessing the water with his hand, he immerses it into the water three times, and says):

**DO YOU YOURSELF, O MASTER, NOW AS THEN SANCTIFY THIS WATER BY YOUR HOLY SPIRIT**

**Grant to all those who touch it, who anoint themselves with it or drink from it, sanctification, blessing, cleansing and health.**

††††

## CONTEMPLATION CONCERNING JESUS

### ***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].

**St. Thomas Aquinas** offers a beautiful meditation here on: **Looking on Jesus:**<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

---

<sup>3</sup> In Heb. 12.



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<sup>um</sup>; 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....***<sup>4</sup>

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

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

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

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].

†

†††

†

## INTRODUCTION

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,<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

In the manifestation of the “Pierced One”<sup>8</sup> 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 scene.<sup>9</sup> Ample studies do exist concerning the “Blood” of the Pierced One.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> 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.

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

<sup>7</sup> Is 53:1

<sup>8</sup> cfr. Zc 12:10; Jn 19:37; Rv 1:7.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. Jn 19:35.

<sup>10</sup> *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.

## PART ONE

### I. A FAITHFUL CONTEMPLATION OF THE 'PIERCED ONE' <sup>11</sup>

*... but over the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem I shall pour out a spirit of grace and prayer and they will look to Me. They will mourn for the one whom they have pierced as though for an only child and weep for him as people weep for a first-born child. When that day comes the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad Rimmon in the Plain of Megiddo... [Zc 12:10-12]*

*... They will look on the One they have pierced ... [Jn 19:37].*

*... He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood, and made us a Kingdom of Priests to serve his God and Father; to him, then, be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen. Look, he is coming on the clouds: everyone will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the races of the earth will mourn over him. Indeed this shall be son. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord ... [Rv 1:6, ff.].*

### Presentation

[1] The text of Jn 19:37 seems to be for the evangelist a passage of extraordinary importance. Together with v. 36, this forms a medley of biblical citations which serve as a **conclusive reflection**, not only after the episode recounted in the preceding verses [19:31-34], but **draws to a conclusion the Passion narrative**. In fact, the combining of two biblical citations to conclude an account is a procedure that is used only two times in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: here and in 12:38-40. This latter is found in the final pericope of the entire public life of Jesus – preparing for the Gospel of Glory, Jn 13:1, ff. Exceptional situation of this nature **serves to indicate the theological meaning of the entire Passion of Jesus**.

[2] The first of the two texts cited: ... ***all this happened to fulfill the words of Scripture: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'***... [Jn 19:36 – Ex 12:46; Ps 34:26] - is probably a passage from Ex, where there is found described the ritual of the **Paschal Lamb**, at the celebration of the **Pasch** in Egypt: ***They will not break any bone...!*** [Ex 12: 10, 46; Nb 9:12].

[3] The other, of course, is from Zc 12:10: ***They will look on the One they have pierced***. In the context of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel these two texts refer to the two events recounted a little before. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind how the entire pericope is constructed [Jn 19:31-37].

[4] It seems to unfold in three movements, clearly disposed in a chiastic manner [A,B,A']:

<sup>11</sup> IGNACE DE LA POTTERIE SJ, *Il mistero del Cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualita' de Cuore di Gesu'*. Studi Biblici. Bologna: EDB 1988, cap. VI, pp. 121-136, *passim*.

- in A [vv. 31-34 ] two events are recounted, one is negative [the soldiers do not break the legs of Jesus, because He was already dead] - the other event is positive [after the thrust of the lance on the part of one of the soldiers, blood and water gushed forth from Jesus' sacred side];

- In B [v. 35], the evangelist gives a three-fold testimony in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: Jn wishes therefore thus to emphasize the exceptional importance of these facts for the Christian faith;

- in A' [vv. 36-37], there are presented the two citations from Scripture which give us the theological interpretation of the two related facts.

[5] Since it is our duty solely do contemplate the interpretation of the second citation here, it is important to observe attentively that this v. 37 is a commentary on v. 34. This means that the citation from **Zecchariah** [***They will look on the One they have pierced...!*** ] is referred by the evangelist to his preceding text: ***They pierced Him on the side and immediately blood and water came out...*** The contemplative gaze of the faithful believers, therefore, is concretely orientated toward the **Pierced Jesus, from Whom blood and water issue**.

[6] However, in order to reflect more deeply on **the theological and spiritual reality revealed in Jn 19:37**, first, we must examine briefly **Zc**, who is cited here - and then the terms within the writings of Jn that prepare for our verse. Then, as we proceed, there will be a careful analysis of the verse itself. This will be followed in the third part by an example of the resonance that the central verse discussed here has had in the ecclesial tradition.



## A. Themes implied in Jn 19:37

### 1. The Text from Zc 12:10:

a. This passage cited by Jn pertains to a Prophetic Oracle that announces salvation and the eschatological restoration of Jerusalem [cf. Z 12-14]. In the passage Zc 12:10-13:1, there is recounted the death of **a mysterious King and Shepherd, who probably represents the future Messiah**. God Himself is revealed as personally 'wounded' by this premature death. But, He takes the initiative for the conversion of the inhabitants of Jerusalem promising them a good spirit and a bubbling fountain of fresh, pure water for their sins. The verses 12:10 & 13:1 at the beginning and at the end of the passage are parallels:

| 12:10   | 13:1  |
|---|---|
| On that day<br>I will pour out over the House<br>Of David, and on the<br>Inhabitants of Jerusalem<br>A spirit of grace<br>And of prayer<br>They will turn their gaze<br>On Me Whom they have pierced. | On that day<br>there will be for the House<br>of David and for the<br>inhabitants of Jerusalem<br>a source [always]<br>opened<br>for sin and for<br>for impurity. |

b. At the verse of Zc 13:1 on the open Fountain for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one can add the text of the **Living Water** of the following chapter: ***On that day, Living Waters will flow out from Jerusalem: half toward the eastern sea and have toward the western ocean; it will be thus in the summer as in the winter. The Lord will be King over all the earth. On that day the Lord unique and unique will be His Name ... [Zc 14:8-9].***

c. The application of these three texts to Jesus Christ on the Cross is obvious. In **Jn 7:38**, Jesus had announced that the streams of living water would have come forth from His breast. The evangelist explains that **He said this of the Spirit**. [v. 39]. Therefore, there is comprehended the connection of the texts of Zc with the scene of Jesus on the Cross: the **open fountain** for the Inhabitants of Jerusalem is **the open side of Jesus** – the **Living Waters that flow from Jerusalem**, according to Zc – are for Jn the **living waters that flow from deep within Jesus** [Jn 7:38], **Who is the New Temple** predicted by Ezk 47.

d. These waters flow east and west and bring **purification and life**. Clearly we have here the theme of **universalism of salvation**. Now, according to the inscription on the Cross willed by Pilate, **Jesus raised on the Throne of the Cross** is presented the **King of the Jews** [19:19-22] – however, this **title** was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. This means that **His messianic regality was proclaimed to the entire world**.

e. There was thus verified also the final prophecy of Zc where it is no longer a matter of the **Pierced Shepherd**, but of the **Lord Himself** and of His **universal regality** in the **eschatological times: *He will be King over all the earth!*** [Zc 14: 9].

f. The application to Jesus of these two prophecies of Zc [12:10-13:1 & 14:8-9] have permitted giving to the scene of the **piercing** and to the **water** flowing from **the opened sacred side an historical- salvific meaning that is quite broad**.

2. **The great Johannine themes present in v. 37:** There are three principal themes of Jn's theology that will re-flourish here:



- the raising up of the Son of Man;
- the gathering of the dispersed Sons of God;
- and the pairing of revelation-faith.

a. The Exaltation of the Son of Man

1.] The passages from Jn which speak of the exaltation of Jesus Christ are well known [3:14; 8:28; 12:32]. These correspond to three announcements of the Passion in the Synoptics. To be raised up in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel does not mean merely raised up into glory, as in the Ascension - but rather the emphasis is on the tight bond in Jn between the **Cross and Resurrection**. This is an expression used to describe **the Death of Jesus** [cf. Jn 12: 33]. This theme is precious in order to **interpret theologically the Calvary scene**, especially the final verse [19:37].

2.] The third passage is the most important: ... ***Now judgment is made on this world, now the prince of this world is cast out. And I, when I will be raised from the earth, I will draw all to my self...*** [Jn 12:31-32]. And here, three grand theological themes converge:

- Jesus is raised up on His Cross as on a royal Throne is the Conqueror of this Prince of this World;
- Jesus draws all to Himself;
- Jesus realizes thus the gathering of the Messianic People to Himself.

3.] Regarding this third theme here, that of gathering the dispersed we will come back to this. As for the first theme, victory of Christ, this is an aspect of His **regality**, strongly emphasized by Jn throughout the entire Passion account. But how are we to understand the second theme here: how does Jesus draw all to Himself?

a.] From the parallel passage [Jn 6:44:45], on the necessity of the attraction of the Father in order to be able to come to Jesus, it is seen that to be drawn means: to listen to the Father and to allow oneself to be instructed by Him, to be taught by God, this is the fundamental attitude of the New Covenant:

... ***All your sons shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children...*** [Is 54:13].

... \* ***The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more...*** [Jr 31:31-34].

b.] So, too, the expression **to be drawn by Jesus on the Cross** indicates the perfect availability and openness of the faithful believer towards all that which Jesus reveals on the Cross. This describes the movement of faith toward the truth of the Cross. Jesus **draws to Himself, by revealing Himself** - there is **need for the Faithful believer to let himself be drawn receiving the truth of the Lord as his/her way, Truth and Life.**

c.] From these three texts on the **raising up of Christ on the Cross** there can be deduced precious indications for the interpretation of Jn 19:37: **Jesus, raised up on the Cross, to Whom the faithful are called to raise their minds and hearts,** seems to be **like a King** reigning from **His royal throne,** in **a stance of Victory.** With **the revelation of the Cross He draws all to Himself, by thus exercising over all the Faithful His regality.** The contemplative gaze that believers will direct toward Him will be **a contemplation of Faith.** There is furthermore, at least it seems so, **a hint toward the theme of the gathering of the People around Jesus raised on high.** We will now ponder this aspect as well.

#### b. **The Gathering of the Dispersed Children of God:**

1.] This is a very important biblical and Judaic theme and has been much studied also in recent years. It is indispensable to examine it a bit more closely because in Jn the **Messianic Assembly** is one of the principal effects of Christ's death. The Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death, fearing that the Romans would come in order 'to destroy the place and the nation' [11: 28]. However, Caiphas prophetically [unwittingly!] said to them: ***It is better that one man should die for the people*** [11:50] This declaration came to be interpreted thus by the Evangelist: ***Since he was High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus ought to die for the nation, and not for the nation only but for the dispersed children of God, in order to gather them into one...*** [11: 51-52]. There is sharp contrast here between **dispersed...unity.**

2.] For Jn this assembly of **the Dispersed Children of God** is realized in the death of Jesus, **precisely at the foot of the Cross.** The New People of God is represented here by the Mother of Jesus, by the Beloved Disciple: **Mary is the Messianic Daughter of Sion**, the Mother who receives her Children [cf. Jn 19: 26, f.] – the Nascent Church. **The Beloved Disciple is the personification of all the Children of God, or all the Disciples of Christ.** Different from Lk in Ac, Jn sees therefore being realized **the Birth of the Messianic People of God**, i.e., of the Church **not so much at Pentecost,** but **standing at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, on Calvary.**

3.] This theme of the **Messianic Assembly of the People of God** leads us to comprehend better the final verse of the Passion account under study here. The fact that many **will turn their eyes toward Him Whom they have pierced**, i.e., toward Christ Who has been raised up, will also create among all these an authentic unity, not however due to any kind of **a horizontal understanding** on a **sociological level.** Rather, all will find the very principle of their unity outside of their group, **in Him.** **They will be all assembled into one,** they will be **orientated toward that One**

**Man raised up on the Cross with His side pierced, opened. Precisely with their contemplative gaze fixed upon Him they will be all gathered into one. In this contemplative concentration, the Dispersed Children of God will become the One Messianic People.**

**c. The Relationship between Revelation and Faith:**

**1.] This coupling can be considered as the structure supporting the entire Johannine theology and message. Without forcing the meaning of the texts it can be stated it surely seems, that this dialectic between Revelation and Faith, may be found also in this present passage that we are contemplating. More precisely, this seems to stand out between vv. 37 & 34, of which it has been pointed out that in the structure of the passage, these correspond with each other. The second verse [concerning that contemplative gaze toward the pierced and open side], this is presented as the response of believers toward the One they have pierced and this is a contemplation of Faith.**

**2.] This results from the various observations noted above: Jesus, from Whose side issue forth both Blood and Water, is a Sign a Symbol, with a sublime revealing sense. To this point which has been already amply treated, we will return further on. Therefore, there is quite evident the importance of this pairing: Revelation/ Faith, for the interpretation of the Calvary scene: to that revelation of the interiority of Jesus, which is presented to believers, with the two-fold symbol of Blood and Water, the Disciples becoming the Faithful, will respond with their contemplative gaze of faith towards the opened and pierced side of Jesus Christ, raised up on the Cross.**

**Summary**

**[1] If these observations indeed prove valid, it becomes clear that the theological themes implicitly connected with the final verse of the Johannine account of the Passion are multiple and complex. We will seek here to summarize them, in synthetic form.**

**[2] With the application of the text of Zc 12:10 to the piercing of Jesus' side, Jn has chosen to indicate that the Water gushing from this open pierced side symbolizes the Living Water of the Holy Spirit, Who brings purification and life to the Faithful. But, in the prophetic text the contemplative gaze toward the Pierced One seems to have been rather a repentant sentiment of believers because of their sins and offenses. This aspect does not appear any further in the Johannine description – where it is presented much more as a Contemplative Gaze of Faith.**

**[3] From the parallel texts within the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, it is seen that Jesus on the Cross, with His opened and pierced side, is presented not only as the King of the Jews, but also as the King of all Believers. Furthermore according to Jn 3:14, Jesus raised up brings salvation, And therefore He is revealed to us as the fulfillment of the type of the Bronze Serpent in the desert, which was a sign of salvation for Israel threatened with death.**

[4] With the revelation of meaning of the Cross, Jesus raised up draws all to Himself – He assembles them around Himself and thus becomes the center of the unity of the Messianic People, i.e., the gathering of all those who becomes the faithful Children of God.



## B. Context of Jn 19:37

At this point in our study, there remains the challenge of performing a two-fold task: the student must first of all must ponder more deeply the ties within our passage [vv. 31-37] with the two preceding pericopes of the section of Calvary [vv/ 25-27 & 28-30]. It would then be required to seek out the more the studying of the more important terms in the passage.

### 1. To where is the contemplative gaze directed?

a. Let us recall that our verse which cites Zc, speaking of the Contemplative Reflection of the Pierced One, goes to v. 34 which describes precisely the piercing of Jesus. There is indicated in this verse the Object of the Contemplation of Faith near the end. For the interpretation of v.37 it is absolutely necessary to comprehend the sense of that two-fold symbol of both **Blood and Water** which flow forth **from the rib of Jesus**. It is good to call to mind here the symbolism unearthed by a careful meditation on the passage, its context and interpretations.

b. This passage, Jn 19: 31-37, throughout the entire gospel tradition is found only in Jn and it relates two apparently insignificant events that unfolded after the death of Jesus. In this sense one can say that the Hour of the Cross for Jn is the culminating moment of Jesus' earthly sojourn. But, here as always, in the Johannine Theology, the specific aspect is that of the revelation of the mystery of the Person and Actions of Jesus. The symbols of the Blood and Water form the open side reveal that which Jesus lived and willed interiorly, even before His dying. To understand this unified symbolic value of the Blood and Water together we are assisted by the literary structure of the section: v. 34 on the Blood and Water from His pierced side refer the attentive reader to v. 30 where there is cited the very last words of Jesus Himself: it is fulfilled! After this, there is described His death: ... bowing His head, He gave up His Spirit! However, vv. 34 & 30 also refer back a little further to v. 28 where the evangelist had explained in anticipation that last expression: ... **after this, Jesus knew that everything had been completed** ... This was all for the perfect fulfillment of Scripture – this explanation then is accompanied by these dramatic words: ***I am thirsty!***

c. There are thus emphasized that in each of the three verses each time, two terms, with diverse connections among them:

- ***all is completed – I am thirsty*** - in v. 28;
- ***it is fulfilled – and He gave up His Spirit*** – in v. 30;
- ***Blood and Water*** – in v. 34.

In these three pairings of terms, the first always describes **the work of Christ**, while the second term the **Mission of the Holy Spirit**. There thus appear two parallel thematic lines that connect these three verses among themselves.

d. The first line presents in three successive terms the **Christological** theme, almost **a compendium of Christ's salvific work**: ***all is completed*** [v. 28] - ***all is completely fulfilled*** [v. 30] - ***Blood*** [v. 34]. The other line develops the **Pneumatological** theme and is orientated toward the **future**: ***I am thirsty*** [v. 28] - ***He gave up His Spirit*** [v. 30]; ***water*** [v. 34]. This other line is orientated to the life of the Church, while the first line provides in synthesis the salvific sense of **Jesus' past life**.

e. The **water of the Pierced Side** as is seen, is **a symbol of the Holy Spirit** – the literary structure is therefore in confirmation of that which results from other observations. But it needs to be noted that that Spirit, which should from now on animate the Church has been given by Jesus Himself [***He gave up His Spirit*** – v.30] and that He already time experienced an ardent desire to give Him over to believers [***I am thirsty!*** - v. 28].

f. The symbol of the **Blood**, on the other hand, is integrally and exclusively **Christological**. The meaning of this symbol is to contemplate the final word of Jesus prior to His death: ***it is fulfilled!*** [v. 30] . From the commentary that the Evangelist makes of this already in v. 28 [***After this, Jesus knew that that ever thing had now been completed and so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled ...***] - there is comprehended all the theological richness of that expression.

g. Two fundamental aspects become clear: on the one hand, Jesus' expression as He was dying: ***It is fulfilled!*** - expresses **His total obedience to the Father's Will** , because the Divine Son has brought to completion the entire messianic plan which was indicated in Scripture. Then, on the other hand the parallelism of **13:1** [... ***having loved those who were His in this world, He loved them to the end*** ...] shows that the **fulfillment** of the Cross implies that in that moment there has been realized **the supreme manifestation of Christ's salvific love for His 'own.'**

h. In two words, it can be said that for Jn **the Blood from the Pierced Side of Jesus is the symbol of His Oblative Obedience to His Father and of His salvific love for all of us.** It can also be further emphasized with some authors, [E. Haenchen], the mournful character of a triumphant cry, of this: ***it is fulfilled!*** This is the **very last word of Jesus prior to His glorification**. The reference to **13:1** shows that in **19:30** there has been achieved **the victorious completion of His entire journey of revelation of love**. His cry: ***It is fulfilled!*** - invites us **not only to experience compassion for Jesus, as even more to**

**celebrate the Conqueror** who has brought to **fulfillment the Father's work: the efficacious manifestation of the divine love.**

**2. They will look on the One they have pierced...** - we have finally arrived at the very heart of our contemplation. All that has been presented up until now has served solely to facilitate the interpretation of this verse, so significant in the entire Johannine account of the Passion.

**a.** Let us take note first of all that Jn's text which is an OT citation [**Zc 12:10**] is not totally identical to that of the Prophet. According to **Zc**, the gaze needs to be turned towards God: **they will turn their look on the One Who pierced Him!** But in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel the text is applied directly toward Jesus Christ raised up on the Cross: **they will look on the One they have pierced!** There is a close tie between this verse and v. 34. This indicates the entire attention is concentrated here on **the Pierced Side of Jesus**, from Whom flows Blood and Water.

**b.** Who are these "They" - who will look so attentively upon the Pierced One? There is a broad spectrum of opinions among the exegetes: some think on the **soldiers** and on the **crowd** - others think about the **Jews** - and still others, think on the **believers in general**. However only this 3<sup>rd</sup> opinion imposes itself, in my view, by reason of the very close tie there is here in the context with v. 35 on the **Witness**. In the two cases, in fact, there may be found the same Greek verb – which, though, in English has to be translated with different verbs: in the one case, **they will see** - and in the other, they will **look on**. Yet the parallelism between the two cases is evident to language scholars:

*...this is the evidence of the one who saw it [the perfect tense here of the Greek verb, *horan*] – true evidence, and he knows what he says is true - and he gives it so that you may believe as well ... [v. 35]*

*... they will look on [ *opsontai*, the future tense of *horan* ] the one they have pierced ... [v. 37].*

**c.** The next area of the reflection here should be on the nature of the **look, gaze, contemplation**, implied here. There is no further treatment here, as in the text of Zc, of a **look of repentance**. It is necessary to recall here all the nuances and all the theological richness of the theme **to seer** in Jn He uses for this purpose 4 different verbs with a progressive passage from **exterior seeing**, one that is **physical** - to an **interior contemplative gaze, pondering**: to fathom [*blepein*] - to **observe** [*theorein* = theorize] - to **contemplate** [*theasthai*] – and to **see** [*horan*] – with varied aspects according to the tenseness of the verb. In **19:35** it is used to describe the **Disciple-Witness**, the verb being a perfect participle, meaning that it expressed **an acquired experience, already possessed**: ....**This is the evidence of One who say it and he knows what he says is true!** [v. 35]. This means that the Witness still retains all that he saw. In the final verse, though, **v. 37**, the future tense is used: ... **They will look to the One they have pierced!** This is **an implicit invitation for all** to turn their **contemplative reflection** toward the pierced side of Jesus in order to **become participants of this experience as well as of the**

**vibrant faith of the Disciple-faithful Witness.** First there is required of the Faithful Witness to **see**: for them, as for the original witness, this **look, gaze** needs to become a **contemplation of faith, and internalized experience**, a permanent possession: *... so that you may believe as well!*

d. Let us recall here now that which was pointed out on concerning the object that gaze of which **v. 37** speaks: Exteriorly it is obvious, that object of that **gaze** can be only that which is then described in **v. 34**: the Pierced Side of Jesus from which flowed forth Blood and Water. However, the **symbolic value** of this fact and **the literary co-relations of the passage** with other texts open here broad perspectives in diverse directions. Let us hold present all that has been said in the first section of this study, on the **biblical background** and the **Johannine background** of the theme – and the also, in the first part of the second section on the ties of **v. 34** with **vv. 28 & 30**, in the literary structure of the episode of Calvary. There is offered here a brief summary of these principal themes:

- the **water** from the opened side is the symbol of the Gift of the Holy Spirit – this is the **Living Water of Salvation** flowing from Jesus' side. He becomes the **New Temple**, the **Eschatological Temple**.

- the **Blood** has appeared to many scholars as the **symbol** and the **revelation** of **Jesus' adherence to the Will of God**, of His **Filial Obedience to the Father and of His salvific love for us**.

- the **Water** that flows from His opened side symbolizes **His Spirit WHom He communicates to us** and with Whom it **becomes possible also for us to participate in these profound dispositions of Jesus Christ**.

e. In this Johannine account, there is not used the word **Heart**. But, the **interiority of Jesus Christ** of which we have spoken is precisely that which later will be called by noteworthy representatives of the mystical tradition of the Middle Ages and from then on, **the Heart of Jesus Christ**. This is not by chance, evidently, that **the most important biblical text** for the theology and the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus is always this Johannine verse on **the Pierced Side of Christ**. The analyses of the modern exegesis of this passage of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel can be a valid help in order to fathom the more deeply also biblically, that theology and spirituality of **the Heart of Christ**.

f. But let us return now to the verse under discussion here, Jn 19:37, before passing to the third section of the present study. Let us insist once more on the strict parallelism of **v.34** with **v. 37**. In the first of these two texts there is treated the **Mystery of Jesus with His Pierced Side**. This is revealed by means of the symbols of the **Blood and Water**. In the second text there is presented the Believer who turns his contemplative gaze to the pierced Christ. The scope of **this contemplative gaze is not simply to see, or look at** the scene. Much more deeply, there is an urgency to **penetrate in faith** its meaning: **to ponder the interiority of the Pierced One**.

g. The penetrating contemplative gaze of the Faithful Believer, therefore, seeks to discover in this scene something of **the Mystery of Christ's interiority**, through the symbols of Blood and Water – but, also to participate, in the Holy Spirit, in that profound interior life of Jesus Christ – and his basic attitude of Loving Filial Obedience, His Priestly Immolation of Self-giving. This profound interior life of Jesus Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit thus becomes the Church's life. It can indeed be said with St. Ambrose: The Church has been introduced into the 'secret room' of Jesus Christ – and now the secret room of the Church is the Body of Jesus Christ – the King has introduced His Spouse into all His mysteries of His Person and Mission.



### C. The Prolongation of this Theme in Tradition

1. **Apoc 1:6-8**: the first point to observe, already very impressive, is that Zc's passage, cited already by Jn at the conclusion of his account of the Passion of the Lord, re-appears here in another context, much more solemn, in the Prologue of the Apocalypse [1:7-8]:

... He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood, and made us a Kingdom of Priests to serve his God and father; to him, then, be glory and power forever and ever. Amen! Look he is coming on the clouds [Dn 7:13]; everyone will see him, even those who pierced him [Zc 12:10, 14], and all the races of the earth will mourn over him. Indeed, this shall be so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come the Almighty...

a. The Author of the Apocalypse reunited here, in order to join them to Jesus Christ, **two celebrated prophecies of the OT: Daniel's [7:13] Messianic Vision on the Son of Man who will come on the clouds of heaven** – and, Zc's [12:9-13] announcement of the Eschatological Restoration of Jerusalem. However, it is necessary to remember that as for this passage from Zc, the author of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel had only noted a few words of it, that of the contemplative gaze toward the Pierced One [Jn 19:37], and gave it a kind of new interpretation as was pondered above.

b. Whereas in the Rv on the other hand, in addition to Zc 12:10, there is also cited the verse following in the Prophecy [Zc 12:14] on the senses of **repentance** of all the tribes and their weeping. As for the text of Zc, Rv assumes, therefore, the **penitential meaning** and it is certainly in this way that the Prophet himself understood this gesture. However, regarding **penitential sense** there is absolutely no longer any trace of this aspect in the shorter citation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel.

c. This particular must be kept in mind if we seek to evaluate exactly the manner in which the verse Jn 19:37 is interpreted in the tradition. Too often, in fact, **between the text of the Gospel of Jn**, on the one hand [a **contemplative gaze**] – and the texts of Zc and Rv on the other [a **reflection of repentance**]. It has not been seen sufficiently that in Jn 19:37 the text of Zc had been read and re-interpreted by



the Evangelist in a new perspective, **that of the faith**. There is thus explained that in the long tradition, there is found a **two-fold reading** of the Johannine verse: one of these, that is quite wide-spread, manifests an **eschatological orientation of Hope** – while the other is of an **ecclesial nature, a Faith-filled Contemplation**. Only this second interpretation seems to have garnered precisely the authentic meaning of Jn.

## 2. Jn 19:37 read in an Eschatological Perspective:

a. This first type of reading is without doubt, the more common in the History of exegesis. In this regard, St. Justine is often cited, who often uses Rv 1:7 [and indirectly Zc 12:10] in order to describe **the Second Coming of Jesus**. Particularly interesting for us is a passage of his from his *Dialogue with Trypho* [32, 2], where the Martyr distinguishes **two Comings of Christ**: the first one, His **Advent, in Humility** in which He was pierced in His execution; **the Second Coming, in Glory**, when **all will recognize the one they have pierced**.

b. There should be noted, however, that for the episode of Calvary [at the end of His First Coming], St. Justine cites only the words on the **piercing of Jesus** and does not cite those on the **gaze on the part of the Jews**. In the second coming, their gaze, as that of all of us, will be **a reflection of repentance**, St. Justine notes. As is seen, the text of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel is read in the perspective of that of Rv. This one example should suffice for the first type of reading.

## 3. The Historico-Salvific and Ecclesial Reading of Jn 19:37

a. Let us recall that which was explained above: by reason of the parallelism of v. 37 with v. 35 [which implies the doubling of the subjects for the two verbs: **they will look upon** and **whom they have pierced** in v. 37]. It seems, then, that it should be said that the **contemplative gaze** toward the Pierced One, as described in the final verse [v. 37], prolongs that '**pondered look**' of the same disciple [v. 35] and becomes then **an invitation to share Faith in Him in the salvific sense of the Calvary Event**. It is from Him that flows the blood and the water from the opened side of Jesus Christ. This was the symbol of which the Faithful Witness offers his testimony.

b. There is thus delineated for the Church a kind of 'typologization' and of 'symbolization' of the **Witness-Disciple**, precisely in that which he had experienced at the foot of the Cross: **he becomes the re-presentation, the model of every Faithful Believer**.

c. Everything had begun with the fact that he had '**seen**', **contemplated in faith**, the Blood and the Water from the opened side and has **believed** even more deeply. However, this **experience** of his, and its resultant **deeper faith**, is the source from which **he continues to render Testimony, Witness** in the community [cf. the perfect tense of 'witnessed'], **so that also all of us might believe!** These events need to become **the experience and the faith of all in the Church**. This is the sense behind the use of the **future tense**, **they will turn** their contemplative

**gaze on the One they have Pierced.** This **Disciple whom Jesus loved** [cf. Jn 19:6] thus becomes **the Model of all Discipleship in Christ.**

d. It is in this manner that our verse has been comprehended correctly by many interpreters throughout the tradition of the Church especially in more recent times. However, the careful reader will find this type of reading in the better Medieval commentary of Rupert von Deutz [+ 1130]. After having observed that Jn 19:37 refers back to the fact noted in Jn 19:34, he thus proceeds, as though to invite us to grasp concretely the announcement contained in the words of Jn: **They will turn their gaze ... of v. 37: Now, in the end, we ought to contemplate at much length such a great event.** We cannot pass over the hidden, 'sacramental' sense of this great event of which the holy Evangelist with such care has given us his testimony. And he then explains the theological and symbolic sense of the two facts noted earlier.

e. Along these same lines, different contemporary authors also develop their thought in **commentaries that are more directly spiritual of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel.** We will cite here J. Laplace: 'All believers are invited to contemplate this great mystery, of which 'the one who saw it, renders his testimony, a witness in harmony with the truth'. This means that his is a witness not only on the fact of which he is he witness, but also of its **deeper meaning**. All are called to look on the Pierced One, in order to believe in the reality of the mystery which has taken place on the Cross: **this is the Mystery of the Paschal Lamb.** The believer is called to **turn his contemplative gaze of faith on His opened side and to discover there the One Whom they have all pierced.** Jesus is the authentic temple, from whose side flow the waters of salvation which give life to the nations.

f. As our ultimate witness here let us recall one of JP II's Homilies. He observes even if he is not actually quoting Jn 19:31-34, he speaks of the **Heart**. And his text orientates us toward **Jesus' interiority**: 'The heart is not only an organ ... it is likewise a **symbol**. It speaks of the totally interior man. It includes the **spiritual interior** of a man. And the tradition immediately has re-lead this sense of the Johannine description. Furthermore, in a certain sense, the Evangelist himself has given the thrust, when in referring to the statement of the eye-witness which he was himself. He refers at the same time, to this phrase of Sacred Scripture : **They will look on the One they have pierced [cf. Jn19:37; Zc 12:10].** Thus in reality he is considering the Church; thus he has humanity in mind. **And behold, in the Pierced One, from the lance of the Roman soldier all the generations of Christians have learned and still are learning how to read the mystery of the heart of the Crucified Man Who was indeed the Son of God.**

## **CONCLUSION**

[1] It is not without reason that the Christian Tradition has always seen in the Johannine passage on the **Pierced Side** the most important text for supplying a biblical foundation for the theology and the spirituality of the **Heart of Jesus**. The study that precedes here shows that this manner of seeing it was, and remains fully

justified. Furthermore, the analyses offered permit the student to broaden and to fathom more deeply this interpretation.

[2] The newest element in the reflections here on Jn 19:34-37, stands perhaps in this: it results now clearly that Jn's text not only asks us to contemplate the Pierced Side of Jesus from which flowed blood and water, but it invites us also – let us take up again here the Pope's expression - **to penetrate into the spiritual depths of Jesus**. St. Ambrose put it this way: this is to enter into the **secret room** of Jesus **passing through the Pierced Side of the Lord**. Thus, the **contemplative pondering discovers His Filial Oblation to the Father and His salvific love** for us. These are deeply hidden in the **mysterious interior** of His heart, symbolized in His Blood.

[3] Through the symbol of the Water which flows out from this New Temple, the Christian comprehends that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is given to Him, and **that each Believer is called to live of this Spirit of Jesus in order to become Faithful**. Thus, all those who will turn their gaze toward the Pierced One will be able from that instant on, to **participate in that profound life of the Paschal Lamb which He gave for the salvation of the world**.

†††

#### D. MARY RETAINED ALL THESE THINGS IN HER HEART

[Lk 2:19, 51]<sup>12</sup>

29\* *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls...* [Mt 11:29].

19\* *But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart...51\* And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart...* [Lk 2:19, 51]

**Introduction:** These texts supply the biblical background for the **Devotion to the Heart of Mary**. In Lk 2:19 offers the main support as her **heart** is mentioned clearly – yet, for many interpreters, the theme is noted also in other Gospel passages. Yet, it remains obvious that because of the emphasis here on **Mary's Heart**, both of Lk's texts prove to be the most important in the tradition of the Church. It is interesting to note that in the Synoptics, the word **Heart** is used solely for Jesus and Mary.

##### 1. The Context of Lk 2:19, 51:

a. The first of these two passages comes a little after the account of the appearance of the Angels to the Shepherds, in Bethlehem [2:17-24] as the Conclusion to the Nativity Narrative:

<sup>12</sup> Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, *Il mistero del cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualità del cuore di Gesù*. Bologna: EDB 1988, pp. 158-168.

*17 And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; 18 and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19\* But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them...*

b. The second text [Lk 2:51], similar to this first one belongs to the **Conclusion of the Infancy narratives**. The emphasis here is on Lk 2:19. Many studies have been consecrated to these two passages. The principal area of disagreement among them is on the literary background of these formulae: some [Neirynck] would place this among the **Hebrew Apocalyptic writings** – others [A. Serra] would see it is from the **Wisdom Tradition**. Whichever is chosen, both the Apocalyptic and the Sapiential traditions have many over-lapping features. The emphasis here will be to discover the precise antecedents of these characteristic formulations employed by St. Luke.

## 2. OT Background [ Gn 37:7, ff.; Dn 4: 13, ff.; 7:1, ff.]

### a. Gn 37:7-11: Joseph's Dream that his Father cherished:

*5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they only hated him the more. 6 He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7 behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose and stood upright; and behold, your sheaves gathered round it, and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him yet more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Then he dreamed another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" 11\* And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.*

The Father's reaction is what is important in our context: to **retain the saying** means above all to impede it from falling into forgetfulness. It means to **keep it alive in memory**, in order eventually to **see it one day realized**. Now the realization of the dream will in fact be recounted further on. In the course of the **Joseph Narrative**, whose account begins forthwith: ...6 **Now Joseph was governor over the land; he it was who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came, and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground**... [Gn 42:6]. And this is in much contrast to earlier times in their lives.

The formula above regarding his father: ... **but his father kept the saying in mind**... [Gn 37:11] - does not only describe the memory-recollection of Jacob. It showed rather that Patriarch having been placed before an enigma that could come from God – the old man retained it in his heart in order to see whether or not it was about to come true at a later time. The expression is therefore orientated toward

the future - it allowed on to foresee the realization of the dream and this was prepared for in the dream.

**b. Dn 4:13-24: The King's Dream interpreted:**

*... 13 "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. 14 He cried aloud and said thus, 'Hew down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. 15 But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven; let his lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth; 16 let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven times pass over him. 17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.'*

*18 This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods \* is in you." 19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a moment, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! 20 The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth; 21 whose leaves were fair and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all; under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the air dwelt-- 22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. 23 And whereas the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Hew down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field; and let him be wet with the dew of heaven; and let his lot be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';*

*24 this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, 25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will. 26 And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be sure for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.*

*27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your tranquillity... [Dn 4:13-24].*

The case of Joseph's Father [Gn 37:11] is similar to what is remembered here. There are actually two separate dreams [King Nabucodonosor and that of Daniel 7]. **Dn 4** recounts the dream of warning for the King regarding the future lowering of his realm to the level of the beasts [4:1-15]. Then follows the interpretation of the dream by Daniel [4:16-24] and finally its coming to pass and the folly of the King [4:25-30].

It is in the final verse of the transition to the third part of the chapter there is found our formula: ... **28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.** In the LXX there is the phrase: 'At the end of these discourses, having understood the judgment that the vision announced, the **King conserved these words in his heart**. Also here, as is seen, the verse orientates one's view toward the future that the King feared – it announces and introduces that which occur immediately afterward: the account of the proximate fulfillment of the dream [cf. 4:39-38].

c. **Dn 7: 1-14: Daniel's Dream:**

*... In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter. 2 Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3\* \* And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4\* The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' 6 After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it.*

*7\* After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. 8\* I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. 9\* As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. 10\* A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. 11 I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.*

*12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. 13\* I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14\* And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages*

***should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.***

This is Dn's celebrated vision of the Beasts, The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. Then there comes once again the interpretation of the vision [cf. 7:15-27]. And then comes the verse of the Chapter's conclusion which forms the transition to that which will follow: ... ***28 "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed; but I kept the matter in my mind..."*** Then, Dn 8-12 prolong the matter up to the announcement up to the announcement of the coming of the times at the end.

In these three cases there is uncovered a similar schema: first, the enigmatic announcement [under the form of a **dream**] of a future and an important event which will soon be realized in the history of the People of God. Then, there follows the accounting of its realization. [However, in the **apocalyptic context** of Dn, there is intertwined between the two an interpretation of the dream. However, the realization remains the principal element. The formula that interests us [***but I kept the matter in my mind...***] prepares and introduces each time, the account of the fulfillment: this describes the passage from the dream to the reality, the transition from the discourse to the event.

### 3. The Bethlehem Text:

a. These clarifications are most useful, because they help us to comprehend better the utilization of the formula by Mary in Lk 2:19: there are found there impressive similarities, but also significant differences with the preceding examples. The common element is certainly the **mysterious announcement** of an important event: in her case, the birth of the Messiah. In Bethlehem, however, it is not a matter of a **dream**, but rather of a message of the Angel of the Lord to the Shepherds: ***Today there is born for you a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David...*** [Lk 2:11].

b. This announcement of the Angel of the Lord is a revelation: **Today** declares the opening of the Messianic Times with the Birth of the Messiah. The great joy that this message brings will be that for all the people [v/ 10]. Therefore, after having come to see the **sign** [v. 12] the matter that had taken place [v. 15], **a new born baby placed in the manger** [v. 16]. The Shepherds then went to see what had taken place and all that had been said regarding this Child. And all those who heard of it were amazed at what the shepherds said [vv/ 17-19]. And it is here in v. 19 that there is placed that verse regarding Mary: **And she treasured all these things ... in her heart.**

c. To comprehend better that which Mary kept in her heart, we need to seek to discern better that which the expression used here designates: **all these things**.

- There may be noted the insistence on the word all, which is placed in an emphatic position – nothing like this was found in the OT texts. . This leaves us open to

understand that there was here a plurality of 'things' that Mary retained in her memory.

- Among these, beyond any doubt, it would be necessary to include above all the **angelic announcement** itself which reveals its **Messianic [Christ] and Transcendent [the Lord!] character** of the newly born.

d. But contrary to what we had in the OT, the reader is already assisting at **a first realization of this announcement**: the Good News had already been given, first to the Shepherds [v.10]. However, these poor men **made what they had heard known** [v. 17] to all those who wanted to listen to it – that this Child is the **Savior, that He is Christ the Lord!**

- There might be noted here in the midst of **all these nuances** these are what form the basis of Mary's treasure: Mary not only had understood **the message**, as in the OT accounts, but she also sees the beginnings of their **realization**, in the very fact of **the proclamation of the genuine identity of the newly born**.

- Furthermore, among all these things that Mary retained in her heart, there should also be placed **the signs that accompanied the birth**. There is no trace of this factor in the OT parallel places.

d. To the Shepherds, there had been given a most clear sign: ***You will find a new born Child all wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger!*** [v. 12]. The sign formed a violent contrast with the **real identity of this Child**, revealed in the message. For Mary, **that contrast, that mystery served as an invitation to hope**, to expectancy, in order to see if and how all this would be realized following the message of the Lordship of the Infant, who was also so badly lodged.

e. The Angelic Hymn had already been for her an initial orientation in her expectancy for the future: **Glory to God in the highest heavens!** United then to the title **the Lord** given by the Angel of God, these words drew the attention of Mary toward **transcendence**. But the further orientation towards the future, by the stereotyped formula **Mary conserved all these things...in her heart** - will be in fact further clarified by the evangelist, ahead in the Gospel: the beginning of the Hymn of **a multitude of Heavenly Hosts**.

f. In Bethlehem, this will be taken up again later on, in Jerusalem, by the **entire multitude** of the disciples [19:37-38] - **[Glory to God in the highest heavens!]**. This is in **the Royal Enthronement of Jesus on Mount Olives**. This scene becomes a symbolic anticipation of the **Ascension, His Heavenly Enthronement at the Right Hand of the Father** [cf. Ac 2:33-35] - only then will Jesus become definitively and in the full sense of the term: **Lord, Messiah**. [Ac 2:32]. It is all the more notable that these titles had already been utilized in the **Angelic Message in Bethlehem** [Lk 2:11]. This shows to what point this theophanic scene of the Birth of Jesus had already for Lk a value of an anticipated symbol of that which was to be realized in a definitive manner at the Ascension.



### 3. He will be called the Son of God:

a. Without doubt, one can also include among **all these things** [cf. Lk 2:19], as the **treasures of Mary's Heart**, still another sign. This had been given before-hand to Mary herself at the moment of the Annunciation: the Angel Gabriel had not only announced to Mary the **virginal conception** of the Infant [cf. 1: 35 a] – but, he had also spoken of His birth. There had been drawn from all this a mysterious conclusion: **Therefore, He shall be called the Son of God!**

b. The Birth was presented as a **sign**. In **2:1-20**, two other times, the **Infant** is spoken of: **first**, when Lk recounts the fact that she **brought forth her first-born son** – 2:7]; **then**, in the message of the Angel to the Shepherds, **today there is born for you a Savior** - 2:11]. It is therefore normal that there should be **compared and pondered** among themselves, **these three texts**, seeking to clarify them, one with the other. **That which had been said at the Annunciation** with regard to that birth which was to take place in Bethlehem –that announcement surely must have been present to the memory of Mary at the moment in which **she brought forth her First-born**.

c. Unfortunately, **v. 1:35 b**, which explains the **manner** of that birth, is much discussed as is its exegesis. We have to limit ourselves to give here a translation and an interpretation to be sought elsewhere for greater detail. For different reasons, it seems, Lk 1:35 b might be translated thus: **Therefore** [as a consequence of the fact that the Power of the Most High would have exercised its action on Mary], **that which will be born holily will be called the Son of God**. this Holy Birth, announced by the Angel, is a birth without contamination, without stain – **in the Levitical sense** – that which the tradition will call the '**virginal birth**'.

d. This is presented here as a sign of transcendental identity of the Infant [therefore]. Let us note in this regard that the conception itself, which is not seen exteriorly, is not a **sign**. The **Birth**, on the contrary, the coming forth from the maternal womb, if it is accompanied by non-habitual particulars, could indeed be a sign. Such would be the case of the **virginal birth** – one without lesion, without loss of blood, that would 'contaminate' [Lv 12:7]. In Lk 1:35 b, this birth is clearly indicated as a sign: the extraordinary character of this birth will lead to the conclusion of the direct action of the Most High in the **conception itself** - from this fact, there would be concluded also on the **divine filiation** of the Infant. This is a verifiable fact [**the virginal birth**] and it is presented as a **sign** of two invisible realities: the **conception** due to the Holy Spirit of God; and the **Divine Filiation** of the Infant.

e. But for whom was this **sign** meant? Since it consisted in the very manner of **giving birth**, it was first a **sign for the Mother herself, for Mary**. But, later on, it would serve as a **sign for believers**. It is therefore unthinkable, in the profound logic of this entire account, that at the moment of the birth of the Infant in Bethlehem. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, would not have remembered that which the Angel has announced to her on that most important moment of **the Birth: this ought to be pure and holy**. And thus it would have been a tangible sign that the Baby

was **the Son of the Most High** [1:32] and he **Son of God** [1:35]. Now, precisely, the Angelic Message at Bethlehem would have taken place in an unforeseen manner to give proof of this.

**Summary:** Among **all the things** that Mary **conserved in her heart**, the analysis here has enabled us to discover both the **words** as well as the **facts** [15:17]. In the listing of these latter we might distinguish two **signs**: that which had been given not much before to the Shepherds [**an Infant in a stable**] and the sign given even before to Mary herself [**the virginal birth of the Child**]. However, both of these were bearers of a **revelation**: **the transcendent and divine identity of the Infant**. Furthermore, this identity was also the direct object of the message contained in the words of the Angel, both at **Nazareth [1:38]** as well as **at Bethlehem [2:17]**. It is the totality of these words, of these events, that constituted **all these things** that Mary retained in her heart.

#### 4. The Verb: **conserved/ retained/ contemplated**:

a. This verb of **Lk 2: 19 [symbolousa]** – needs its own contemplation! As in English there are many nuances to this term. The challenge of the exegete is enormous, due to the many possible translations offered by the Dictionary. But, if one keeps in mind the very precise construction of Lk, there are some hints already for a solution.

b. The verb is a composite: **sym** - **ballo** - and its direct object, or complement, is **all these things**. It is **not a simple meditation**, but rather has the clear hint of **compare, confront** - i.e., in the passage at hand: **Mary truly and deeply sought to comprehend all these things, by comparing them among themselves**. According to the biblical analysis presented in this reflection of ours on the passage, **all these things** are the recent events with their value as **a biblical sign [the virginal birth; the appearance of the angels to the poor shepherds; the sign of the new-born Infant in a stable]** – which **the two-fold angelic message [at Nazareth and at Bethlehem]**. It is in **comparing prayerfully among themselves all these things** that **Mary sought to comprehend ever better the sense and the implications** of all those **mysterious events** contained in **these messages from on high**.

c. However, other notable authors – like the Ven. Bede and A. Serra, OSM – understand this **confrontation, comparison** in another manner: Mary in this view, would have striven **to grasp, to interpret these amazing facts** by **comparing them as well with the OT, as well as with these recent events – especially the resurrection**. However, this interpretation may be a stretch, and does not seem sufficiently well founded, because it cannot support itself on any data in the biblical text; there is nothing that would lead anyone to think of the Resurrection. Furthermore, the construction of the phrase demands that the action of the verb: **confront, compare**, should bear on **all these things** – i.e., on the totality of the **recent events** that Luke presents regarding **the Birth of Jesus**, and **the happenings in Nazareth and the more recent events of Bethlehem**.

d. Nonetheless, the fact remains: that the expression **conserved, retained, kept in her own heart** orientates one **towards the future**. And the parallelism with that which has been noted by John the Baptist, in a similar passage, confirms this fully: *And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. 67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David..."* [Lk 1]. Some of these phrases echo then in Mary's reaction to the marvelous happenings regarding her own Son in 2:19. Immediately one could legitimately ask: would not the meaning of all this become explicit in this way: 'Is He, Jesus, perhaps not the expected, the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah, the Lord [cf. 2:11], **the Son of God** [1:35]?

e. The complete answer to all this can of course only be given later by Lk as his Gospel unfolds further. However, Mary herself, during the Infancy of Jesus, integrated ever more fully her personal and inner contemplation regarding the new facts and the new words as they presented themselves to her from on high, pertaining to her only-begotten Son, Jesus [cf. 2:51]. Lk returns to the formula of **2:19**, in **v. 51**, as is well known by now. In this latter text, Lk applies **all these things** to the entirety of the gospel up until that moment, **as an antiphon closing the Infancy phase of Jesus' life on earth, and opening up the mysterious hidden years**. The reflections, comparisons that Mary contemplated through the years continued to broaden, deepen intensify, develop and grow [cf. DV 8 b] in her life of faith.

### Conclusion

[1] It is no surprise that St. John Eudes would find in these texts [Lk 2:19, 51] the biblical foundation for the devotion to the Holy Heart of Mary – always in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is exegetically true that these two passages only illustrate more clearly that had been said in the accounts of the **Annunciation** of Mary and her **Visitation**.

[2] At Nazareth, Mary had been declared the **Handmaid of the Lord** and she had expressed her joy-filled assent to the Word from on high **[1:38]**. A little later Elizabeth had proclaimed her **blessed** because she had **believed that which the Lord had said to her**.

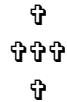
[3] With Paul VI, it can be said that **Mary is the listening Virgin, the Virgin who listens, who receives the word of God in faith**.<sup>13</sup> Hers was an active faith, personal, one that was always listening to the new words of God, always attentive to new signs, in order **to better comprehend and to penetrate the mystery of the Infant** of Whom she was His Mother. Furthermore, her was a faith that was intimately united to **Hope, in the tranquil expectancy of a fulfillment** still hidden in the shroud of mystery, but of which she was certain, **banking on the certitude of the tendency of faith**. As Origen noted so well, she knew that there

---

<sup>13</sup> Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, # 17.

would be a moment in which that which was hidden in Him would be manifest in God's own time.

[4] Therefore, Mary who **conserved all these things in her heart**, confronting them in her heart, comparing them one with the other, **she is the perfect model of this New Heart** which the prophets promised [cf. Ezk 36:26]. This **New Heart is the privileged seat of the New Covenant of Mercy** [cf. Jr 31:33]. **It is only in a heart of this kind that faith might be deepened, intensified, broadened.** The Heart of Mary is the first human heart in which this New Covenant of Mercy is realized, that New Covenant between humanity and God .



## II. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FESTIVAL OF WATER

### INTRODUCTION: A RAPID SURVEY OF TEXTS CONCERNING *THIRST*

The oracle of Isaiah has sounded through the centuries: He is the God of our salvation, the strength, our song. And fresh water will be drawn joyfully from the sources of redemption (cf. Is 12:3).

The literature of ancient Israel is replete with the theme of thirst:

#### A Rapid Survey of the Texts:

1) In the **Pentateuch**, the theme of thirst is intimately connected with the desert sojourn. The great “wonder of the water” is noted a number of times.

a) The Israelites were complaining about their “freedom” in the desert, and were sorely tempted to return to the “flesh-pots” of slavery. In their torment of thirst, they complained against Moses (cfr Ex 17:1, ff.).

b) This pattern seems to repeat itself in the desert sojourn as will be seen below. In the harsh existence of the desert, “there was no water for the community”. In such sharp contrast to the Garden of Eden, the desert was a place with no figs, vines, pomegranates – not even water to drink! (cfr nb 20:2, ff.).

c) The **Deuteronomist** saw the lack of water as the result of failure to serve the Lord God. In response to this, the People that god meant for Himself will have to experience hunger and thirst (cfr Dt 28:48), such basic human sufferings.

2) In the “**Former Prophets**”, there is the unusual story of David risking the life of his stalwarts in asking them to go behind the enemy lines to get him a drink of water. In a ceremonial gesture David pours the water away – not being able to drink water for which men have risked their lives (cfr 2 S 23:13, ff.).

3) In the “**Later Prophets**”, thirst is so often associated as clear indication of the great need the Israelites have for God. The presence of water was always an indication of divine blessings; while its absence often was seen as a punishment.

a) There is a prophecy early in **Isaiah** predicting the exile, which will be imposed “for want of perception”. The high and the mighty as well as the lowly, will experience hunger and thirst (cfr Is 5:13). Streams of water in dry places is the image used to describe leadership according to the Torah – they are like the shade of a great rock in thirsty ground (cfr Is 32:1, ff.). The prophet also mentions the mirage of a thirsty person, who dreams he has come to fresh water – but, he awakes, with his throat still parched (cfr Is 29:8).

Isaiah also offers a vision of the messianic times: the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb will all be healed – and there will be streams in the desert, lakes in the wilderness, out of dusty soil will spring a fountain (cfr Is 35:6).

b) It is more in **Deutero-Isaiah** that this imagery of the water is the more developed. In this Book of Consolation, repeatedly the promise is that the thirsty will have plenty of water, and across the desert there will be an “arbor-way”, flourishing trees, even those that need an abundance of water (cfr Is 41:17, ff.). The messianic times will be characterized by the water in the wilderness. The people chosen by the Lord, will drink abundantly from the streams, and in response will sing the praises of the Lord (cfr Is 43:20). The association with the streams of fresh water and the spirit is also made by Second Isaiah. The spirit and God’s blessing will pour out like streams of water on the dry ground (cfr Is 44:3).

It seems that the **Prophet of Consolation** has recognized the two wonders of Exodus repeating perhaps the two stories of creation: the dividing of the waters and the obtaining of water from underneath the desert floor. The promise that was fulfilled was that God’s people would not go thirsty, for the Lord split the rock and gave His chosen people a drink (cfr Is 48:21). The messianic servant will spring like a sapling planted in arid ground, but nurtured with hidden springs (cfr Is 53:2). And the Book of Consolation comes to a close with the exultant invitation: come to the water, anyone who is thirsty (cfr Is 55:1).

c) **Jeremiah**, as has been noted, identified the Lord Himself with the “Fountain of the Living Water”. The Israelites rejected this refreshing source, and built for themselves cisterns that could not contain the water. The prophet was bemoaning the many pacts they made with earthly rulers, and expressing his sorrow for the fact that his people had not returned to the Lord. He deeply regrets that Israel has rejected the Fountain of Living Water (cfr Jr 2:6, 13, 18; 17:13).

d) **Ezekiel**, too, saw what was coming: early in his prophecy he compares Israel to the vine. The Lord had originally planted it next to the streams of living water – and the branches of the vines turned into scepters. But, in the exile, the vine will be back out in the desert, the waterless country of drought – and it will produce no more kings (cfr Ezk 19:10, ff.).

Ezekiel lays the blame for the failure in a particular way on the kings, poor leadership. These kings tramped and muddled the waters the flock was meant to drink – in the promise for the new times, the Lord will send the seasonal rains, and enrich the soil and the earth (cfr Ezk 34:18, f., 26). The coming of the New Covenant will be noted when clean, fresh water will be poured over Israel, and the people will be cleansed. The Garden of Eden will return (cfr Ezk 36:24, ff, 34, f.). In this Eden, there will be a harvest every month because of the wondrous river that will be flowing from the sanctuary – even the leaves of the trees will be medicinal (cfr Ezk 37:1, ff.).

e) The prophet **Hosea**, in describing punishment, sees Israel dying of thirst (cfr Ho 2:3, ff.). The certainty of the Lord’s coming is compared to the new dawn, the return of light: these are always certain and predictable. However, the precise timing of the spring rains watering the earth cannot be predicted with such precision – but they will come, and so will the Lord (cfr Ho 14:5, ff.).

f) **Joel's** vision of the new times will be wine and milk flowing in the mountains and hills. The dried up river beds will be filled anew with water, and a fountain will spring out from the Lord's own house (cfr Jl 4:18).

g) **Amos**. In the context of the Exile, the prophets' message was not unlike that of the Deuteronomist: the Lord "permitted" the desert experience to work a conversion, to test hearts. Amos presents the Lord's complaint that even when He kept back the rains, and Israel's thirst went unquenched, still they did not come back to the Lord (cfr Am 4:7, ff.). This same prophet also predicted a terrible famine, and a drought, not of water, but of hearing God's word. The Israelites will fail to find it, and delicate girls, as well as youthful swain – all will faint from thirst (cfr Am 8:11, ff.).

h) Particularly in **Deutero Zechariah** is the image of the water brought to the fore: the prophet directed Israel to offer prayer for the seasonal rains, as these produce grain and grass, bread for humanity and grazing grounds for the herds (cfr Zc 10:1, ff.). The final Festival of Tabernacles will see no more cold nor frost. Even in the dark night, there will be an abundance of light, with the renewal of the splendors of creation. There will be an abundance of streams of water, in all the seasons of the year (cfr Zc 14:6, ff.).

i) As would be expected, the **Psalms** make abundant use of the water as a symbol for a variety of responses to God.

(1) **Ps 22** – In the Canticle of Hope of the Poor Man, he compares his plight with that of water draining away. The description is almost that either of terrible fear, or of a fever: his palate is dry as dust, and his tongue is stuck to the roof of his mouth (cfr Ps 22:14; cfr also Ps 32:3, f.).

(2) **Other psalmists** saw the abundance of water as an expression of God's power in Providence. The Lord's visitation of the earth provided it with abundant water. The showers were controlled, and the image given is one of bucolic paradise. The valleys are resplendent in their garment of grain, and Israel responds with the shouts of joy (cfr **Ps 65:9**, ff.). In a magnificent "Creation Canticle", the Psalmist praises the Lord for sending the streams of water into the ravines, affording abundant sources even for the wild animals to have their drink (cfr **Ps 104:10**, ff.).

(3) **Psalm 42**: The Lament of an exiled Levite: the well-known comparison of the doe seeking the running streams offers a most apt imagery for one seeking the splendors of the ancient Temple ceremonial. This Psalm opens what experts see as the Second Book of psalms, which ends with Ps 83. It is the cry of an exile in a hostile area. The "homesickness" or nostalgia for the "good old days" cuts him profoundly. This profound yearning for God is almost mystical in its depth and beauty.

The image of an exhausted, thirsty (perhaps wounded or chased) doe has been the object of reflection of mystics and poets through the centuries. The delicate doe "pants" for the fresh, leaping streams that will restore her. One can imagine an animal frightened and worn out by the chase, perhaps by coupling the imagery of Ps

22, where the psalmist feels surrounded by a pack of wild dogs, and his mouth is so dry (cfr Ps 22).<sup>14</sup>

(4) **Psalm 63:** The Thirst for God: this psalm speaks of one comparing his yearning for God like the dry desert ground absorbing water. It is a poem that seems closely associated with the two preceding Psalms, “The Prayer of One in Exile” (Ps 61), and “The Canticle of Hope in God Alone” (Ps 62). Again, this psalmist expressed a kind of mystical need for God, best described in his view as parched, weary, waterless land. This is a profession of unusual faith – all that is less important has been put aside: there remains only a single Good, God.

There is in each person a natural quest for happiness, in both truth and goodness. The unknown author of this canticle describes his basic yearning as one of the “Poor whom Yahweh loves”. There is almost a nuptial intimacy noted (cfr v. 2), as the “soul clinging” to the Lord. The NT will develop this in Paul’s words: to be joined to the Lord is to be one spirit with Him (cfr 1 Co 6:17).<sup>15</sup>

(5) **Psalm 146:** The humble supplication of one persecuted: this poem uses the same symbolism. The poet stretches out his hands like thirsty ground. The psalmist looks back over the years through the sacred memories of Israel’s history: he recalls the days of once upon a time. He meditates, ponders on the wonders of God. Implicit in his prayer, is that the Lord “perfect” what has been begun. He asks for help to sustain the present grief.<sup>16</sup>

### SUMMARY

So, along with the dividing of the Red Sea – which would correspond to the Genesis 1 creation story, with the word and spirit of God dividing the waters so that the world could be, Exodus also offers a new rendition of the Genesis 2 story, the making of water appear from underneath the desert floor.

In the encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, Pope Pius XII makes this comment:

... For those who were listening to Jesus speaking (in Jn 7), it certainly was not difficult to relate these words by which He promised the fountain of ‘living water’ destined to spring from His own side, to the words of sacred prophecy of Isaiah, Ezechiel and Zechariah, foretelling the messianic Kingdom – and likewise, the symbolic rock from which, when struck by Moses, water flowed forth in a miraculous manner (cfr Is 12:3; Ezk 47:1-12; Zc 13:1; Ex 17:1-7; Nb 20:7-13; 1 Co 10:4; Rv 7:17; 22:1).



<sup>14</sup> cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Cœur de l’homme. Etude textuelle et littéraire et doctrinale. Belgique*. Ducolot 1977, Vol 2, pp. 3-31, passim.

<sup>15</sup> cf. L. Jacquet, *ibid.*, 288-301.

<sup>16</sup> cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Cœur de l’homme. Etude textuelle et littéraire et doctrinale. Belgique*. Ducolot 1979, pp. 663-673.



## Brief History

Because of the absence of water, there develops in the Book of Exodus what modern exegetes have referred to as a “Complaining Pattern”, which might have served also liturgical purposes. Three incidents come to mind:

- a. Marah (cfr Ex 15:22-26): a kind of “pattern” develops:
  - The occasion of the people’s murmuring was because they were not able to drink the waters of Marah, because they were bitter (cfr v. 23);
  - Moses is contested: and appeals to God.
  - The Lord intervenes through Moses mediation – he places the wood in the waters, and they become sweet.

This drama almost naturally lends itself to a liturgical reading. It would strike the Israelites listening “this day”, and they would be asked to look into their own judgments. In the Deuteronomist tradition, this was looked upon as one of those times when the Israelites failed to trust in God.

- b. Rephidim (cfr Ex 17:107): it does not seem that this is terribly far from Sinai. The Hebrew word for “Controversy” (RIB) is found in the middle of the word “Meriba”. Some wonder that perhaps in the distant past, “Massah and Meribah” were localities where juridical decisions were made – but, they have come down in sacred history as the place where Israel “complained” against God.<sup>17</sup>

The ancient stories do offer a kind of pattern:

- the occasion of the complaint: there was no water near their encampment at Rephidim;
- the crowd takes up the complaint with Moses – who in turn complains, and asks why they find fault with him. In their response, the crowd shows that it has lost a bit of faith that it had in the exultant “victory” of its first departure from the “house of slavery”. The Israelites once more believe that they will perish in the desert.
- Moses goes to God, with more urgency this time: he prays that in a bit, perhaps they will stone him.
- The Lord intervenes, directing to Moses to strike the rock, with the same staff that divided the sea.

This is still a further miracle over the waters. There is an increase in intensity in this second “complaining” story. There is a much more intense litigation brought against God – and the response to the complaining, is still another miracle.

- c. Kadesh (Nb 20:1-13): some interpret these merely as separate incidents during the long sojourn in the desert. A deeper lesson, though, is the fact that from these diverse happenings in Israel – and the worshippers of every generation who heard these stories read – would be reminded of the sacred wonders of the past.

---

<sup>17</sup> cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus – OT Library*. London: SCM Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> impression 1979, pp. 305-309.

The Lord indeed was a kind of “Rock” following Israel across the wasteland (cfr 1 Co 10:4). The real teaching here is that God will not abandon His people.

The episode at Kadesh begins with an incident that spreads already a pall of gloom over what will happen. The text reads tersely: it was there that Miriam died (v. 1). The begins the complaint pattern:

- the occasion, again, is the fact that there was no water for the “community” or “assembly”. These are almost “priestly” liturgical expressions.

- Moses is submitted to a real vitriolic attack: we would have been better off had we died! Why did YOU bring us here to this wilderness, a whole “assembly”? There follows a rather traditional description of the desert, in stark contrast with the Garden of Eden: there are no figs, no pomegranates – not even any water to drink.

- not unlike the action of the high priest, Moses leaves the main body of the “assembly”, and prays face down, in his role of mediation.

- and once more, the Lord intervenes. Moses has been directed “to take up the branch.” This circumstance would make one wonder if this would have later in Israel’s history been a reading for the Feast of Tabernacles. The people in the temporary “Huts” would have been forcefully reminded of their ancestor’s situation long ago in the desert.

- then, the waters sprang forth in abundance from the rock.

Both Moses and Aaron are condemned here – perhaps for joining in on the complaining. On a deeper level, Moses enters into profound solidarity with his people, being condemned with them. In fact, like One later whom Moses represents, he too would die outside the sacred precincts. This perfect identification of the high priest with his people is found in the Servant theme (especially in Isaiah 53), and then in Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup>

This thrice-repeated episode of the complaining because of the water brings out a profoundly religious fact: God’s people indeed did suffer great discomfort and opposition in the harsh desert journey. The many trials, though, led to truly heated accusations against Moses, and against God. By the same token, the “Complaining Pattern” shows repeatedly the infinite mercy of God.<sup>19</sup>

The **rock in the wilderness** would remain through the generations as the “witness” of the providential intervention on the part of God in behalf of His people. The rock in the desert would also remind Israel for generations that they would count on the Lord to assist them and to guide them.<sup>20</sup>

This journey of the people of God across the desert will be looked at differently according to the traditions: there is one tradition that saw the Exodus generation as

---

<sup>18</sup> cf. R. Michaud, *Moïse – histoire et théologie* Paris: du Cerf, Lire La Bible/49. 1979, pp. 133-147, passim.

<sup>19</sup> cf. B. S. Childs, *ibid.*, pp. 254-264.

<sup>20</sup> cf. F. Michaeli, *Le livre de l'Exode, II, Commentaire de l'AT. Paris.* Delachacux et Niestle 1974, pp. 148-152, passim.

disobedient, and hence punished (cfr Ps 95). The “major” view, though, seems to have been that of the prophets – and also that of the Book of Numbers. This was the time of the “engagement” of the Lord to His people. Deuteronomy saw the desert as punishment, as a time of trial, inspired of course, by a Father’s love. Numbers, though, saw it in the prophetic imagery of an ideal time in which God’s people was called to make a choice. The desert was meant to be a time of conversion for all those present in the “community”, or “assembly”. The Book of Numbers is also the record of incessant unhappiness of God’s people with Him. The present suffering (cfr Nb 11:6; 20:2; 21:5, f., 3, 33) is always a chance to make choices. Undergoing the ordeal, strengthened by the water that was provided along with the divine promises, Israel is assured of entering the Promised Land.<sup>21</sup>

The water from the rock remains one of the great wonders of ancient times, and was remembered through the succeeding generations in Israel’s Song of Praise (cfr Dt 8:15; Ne 9:15; Ps 78:15-20; 105:41; 114:8; Sgs 11:4; Is 48:21).

What has been seen thus far now finds its way into John’s writings, where these symbols are fulfilled in a manner beyond the wildest dreams of the early prophets. The two creation stories (that of seven days; the Lord dominating the unruly abyss; and that of calling the absent waters up from underneath the earth’s floor).

These “wonders of God” repeated in some way in Exodus: the dividing of the Sea of Reeds – and the calling up of the water from the stone in the desert. These stories are then re-worked in some way, particularly by Isaiah and Ezechiel – and then Zechariah makes his substantive contribution: The **Pierced One** – the **Eschatological Fountain** – and the “Soteriological” **Good Shepherd**, whose life is a holocaust for God’s people.

## A. REDEMPTIVE CREATION

### Presentation:

1. Creation: Water was seen as praising the Lord for His role in establishing the world firm (cfr. Ps 93:2-4). The Lord is presented in a wide variety of guises in relation to water:

- He is the sovereign Lord over the immense abyss (cfr Is 40:13); His redemption of His people uses the imagery of redemption, and in saving His people, He “re-creates” them (cfr Is 43:2, 16; 51:2; 51:10; 57:20; 63:12; 64:1); He generously

---

<sup>21</sup> cfr. J. deVaulx, *Les Nombres. Sources Bibliques*. Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 219-227. cfr. + C.M. Martini, SJ, *Vita di Mose. Vita di Gesu – Esistenza pasquale*. Rome: CIS 1979, pp. 135-158.

pours out life-giving waters (cfr Is 41:17, f.; 43:20; 44:3, f.; 48:21; 49:10; 55:1). Israel will even be compared to a fountain of water (cfr Is 58:11).<sup>22</sup>

- Jeremiah sees the power of thunder and lightning, tumultuous waters, as manifestations of the power of God (cfr Jr 10:13; 51:15, ff.) The Wisdom tradition saw the creative power of God manifest in the limits placed on the seas (cfr Job 26:10); the Lord “measured” the waters with a gauge (cfr Jb 26:10; 28:25, ff.). Wisdom is seen as pre-existing the moment when the Lord fixed the waters of the abyss (cfr Pr 8:24, f., 28). Only the One Who has made a cloak of the waters, or Who has restrained the winds, is able to ascend to the heavens (cfr Pro 30:4) – the symbol of water offering a backdrop for the later revelation of the Incarnation.

2. **Providence:** There is almost a “proof” of the existence of the creator that may be had by studying the “swift air”, the stars, heaven’s lamps, or roaring water – From His governing the elements, knowledge of Him may be had.

3. **Humanity:** Later science would point out that a major element in the substance of human beings is water. So very often, the image of water is used to describe humanity:

- human fear, or perhaps fever: one feels that he/she is draining away (cfr Ps 22:14);

- human qualities: the deepness of water offers an apt image for the words of a good person (cfr Pr 18:1). Discernment is needed to draw on the depths of good persons. The Lord will direct the heart of the kind, as flowing water (cfr Pr 21:1);

- the development of the “good”: a good person is compared to a tree by the banks of living water. This is a classical image, often used to describe morally good people particularly among the prophets (cfr Jr 17:8; Ezk 17:5; 31:4-9; 47:12). It is an oft-used biblical image to describe the prosperity of the just (cfr Ps 52:8; 92:13; Nb 24:6). The imagery here may be from Genesis, where the tree of life was kept alive from the unending streams of water, flowing in the garden, and out to the world (cfr Gn 2:5-14; Is 58:11; Jb 29:19).

- human wickedness: human beings are pictured as drinking iniquity like water (cfr Jb 15:16; 34:7).

- lamentation: Job compares his groans to water, and his food to “sighs” (cfr Jb 3:24).

4. **Basic human needs:** this fundamental requirement was well known to people whose lives bordered on the desert, living on the tip of the “fertile crescent”, which often knew drought. In praise of home and hospitality, Sirach claims the first thing in life is water (cfr Si 29:21).

---

<sup>22</sup> cf. P. E. Bonnard, *Le second Isaïe, son disciple et les éditeurs*, Is 40-46. Paris: Gabalda et Cie., 1972, p. 539, no. 51.

5. Punishment: it is not surprising that the specter of the original unruly abyss in the creation story might return. The original story spoke of the desert, the darkness and the abyss (Gn 1:1, ff.): in the two creation stories of Genesis, there was either an abundance or a lack of water:

a. Abundance: the prophetic threat was that the people would be shattered by the waves (cfr Ezk 27:34), as in the story of the Covenant with Noah. When Israel took back its word, the Lord called back His creative Word and Spirit, and the original chaos returned (cfr Gn 6:5, ff.).

b. The lack of water: this was understood both atmospherically, as well as “spiritually”, the rejection of the word of God. The people will be like the tree, languishing in the relentless drought (cfr Is 1:30); the support of bread and water will be removed from Jerusalem and Judah (cfr Is 3:1, ff.). In the difficult times, there will be given water only “grudgingly” (cfr Ezk 4:16, ff.). And a sign that the Israelites are “no longer his People”, will be when there will be the dreaded drought of the word of God in the land (cfr Am 8:11).

6. The passing nature of human life: Sirach may have had the idea of the seas as the “womb of all life”, in a phrase so strongly reminiscent of the Church’s Ash Wednesday reminder: “Dust you are and unto dust you will return.” Everything comes from the water, and all will revert to it (cfr Si 40:11). Human beings pass each other like birds on the wing – a brief flap of the wings and they are no more. Human beings are ships that pass on the open sea – in a brief time, there is hardly any wake left as time goes on (cfr Ws 5:20, f.).

7. Hope: yet, even a tree that has been felled – its roots “smell” the water, and comes to life (cfr Jb 14:7). Like the desert itself, with a minimum of rainfall as the decades roll on – but with each rainfall, new life appears. The power of water is described by Ben Sirach. He offers a grandiose meditation on divine glory (cfr Si 42:15-42:37) as this is reflected in nature. This wisdom writer was profoundly moved at the aspect of the marvels of the heavens and earth – like an ancient St. Francis, he saw the Creator in it all. He believed that the wilting desert winds were from the Lord – and in the day times, the Lord sent a substitute for rain, the saving morning dew – the healing mists, the reviving moisture (cfr Si 43:21, ff.).

8. Prayer: the exiled Levite compared his soul to the thirsty ground that yearns for the reviving graces of the Lord (cfr Ps 63:1, FF.). The author of the Lamentations, perhaps thinking of the destroyed Temple, speaks of an evening prayer – in which the heart is invited to express itself like the outpouring of water before the Lord.

9. Spiritual Blessings: as water so often brought relief from the drought, and the promise of a harvest. Isaiah uses the symbol of water for the blessings of the final times (cfr Is 12:3). After the “bread of sufferings and the water of distress”, the Lord promises the saving rains; on every hill there will be streams of vibrant water (cfr Is 30:19-26). The messianic times will be greeted by the blind seeing, the deaf hearing and the lame dancing for joy. What was a desert because of Israel’s infidelity will now once again become a fertile land, bubbling with water: it will be a lake, the place

of springs of water (cfr Is 35:5-7). The blessings of God are so abundant, so “present”, that in the future times the blessings of God will soak like a river, like a flood (cfr Si 39:22). The Lord manifests absolute dominion over all waters (cfr Si 38:5).

10. A Sign of the New Covenant: the fresh, clean, purifying waters came to be a sign of the New Covenant that the Lord would establish with his specially chosen, albeit unfaithful people. In the extended nuptial metaphor of Ezechiel (c. 16), a passing monarch comes upon an abandoned Bedouin baby girl, still struggling in the rich blood of her birth. The sheik stops, bathes the infant, and this people “became his”. The New Covenant is seen as being washed in the fresh water, that cleanses (cfr Ezk 36:35, ff.).

†

## 1. WATER AND LIFE

### I]. WATER IN THE CREATION STORIES

Throughout, God is presented as having dominion over the waters: if there is a drought, this means that he is “holding them back” – if there is a flood, this means that he has unleashed them (cfr Jb 12:15; 26:8, f.). With this close association, God himself and his qualities are described with the image of water:

1. God Himself: the prophets often compared God to water: His wrath, or punishment. God is presented as a river “in spate” and Israel is in “up to its neck” (cfr Is 30:38). The kindness of God is presented as water, and God is revealed as “a fountain of living water” (cfr Jr 2:13; 17:13) – and the great tragedy implicit in this image is that Israel has gone elsewhere looking for refreshment.

2. The Wisdom of God: the imagery is abundant, even including the nuptial theme. However, wisdom as good food and drink, which would later be taken up in the Evangelists (cfr Mt 5:6; Jn 4:13, ff.), is already presented by Ben Sirach: whoever eats or drinks the wisdom of the Lord, will hunger and thirst for more (cfr Si 24:21, ff.; cfr also the “sapiential” elements in Jn 6). There may be here the imagery of the Torah once going out of Israel in a column of smoke, it has now come home. The basic idea here would be that “the Torah is true Wisdom.” This is the much desired “fruit”, “honey” and fresh water. As these are consumed, the hunger and thirst increases. By partaking of these in abundance, one makes a clear and definite choice between death or life (cfr Dt 30:15, ff.). By being consumed, the Torah or Wisdom becomes part of one’s substance, enabling life.<sup>23</sup>

3. A Special Form of divine blessing: the Morning Dew: when Jacob obtained the aged Isaac’s blessing by his cunning, the dying Patriarch offered a blessing and a

---

<sup>23</sup> Cfr H. Duesberg et L. Franssen, *Les scribes inspirees – Introduction aux livres sapientiaux de la bible: Proverbes, Job, Ecclesiaste, Sagesse, Ecclesiastique*. Belgium: Editions du Maredesous 1966, pp. 617, 637, 663, 674-676, 693, 707-709, 735, 741.

curse: for Jacob, the Lord would give the heavenly dew, abundant harvests (cfr Gn 27:28) – whereas for the unfortunate Esau, the dew would be far from him (cfr v.39).

a. In the long dry season, the dew is both essential, and providentially abundant. In the rainless summer, it was looked upon as a divine blessing. There are perhaps four absolutely rainless months, and a summary of the characteristics of the dew is as follows:

b. It quickly evaporates (cfr Ex 16:14) – as the heat of the day increases (cfr Ho 6:4) – thus the dew also is a kind of image of the impermanence of the things of this world (cfr Ho 13:3);

c. Popular interpretation had it falling from the sky, much like rain (cfr Zc 8:12), or from the clouds (cfr Pr 3:20) – it comes quietly (cfr 2 S 17:12); a silent coming;

d. It is most often associated with productivity (cfr Gn 27:28);

e. It always implies refreshment of the earth, renewal (cfr Ps 110:3; Ho 14:5, f);

f. It indicates something beyond human capacity (cfr mi 5:7).<sup>24</sup>

1) Genesis – as the Israelites had become an agricultural people, dew was readily seen as a providential intervention on the part of God in favor of his dependent people. In the Saga of Jacob, (cfr Gn 27), the particular blessing given, invoking the god of fertility and of the land (cfr v. 28), there is a great parallel with a blessing given later to Joseph (cfr Gn 49:25, f.), and those of Deuteronomy (cfr 33:13-17). These passages would almost lend themselves to readings for the great festivals, maybe that of Unleavened Bread (cfr Lv 23:10-14), or the Feast of Weeks (cfr Lv 23:15-21), or the Feast of Tabernacles (cfr Lv 33:33-43).<sup>25</sup>

The heat of the Middle East is reflected in different passages: we find Abraham, sitting by his tent door “in the hottest part of the day” (cfr Gn 18:1); there are also indications of people dying of sunstroke (cfr 2 K 4:18, f.; Jdt 8:3). It was in “the cool of the day” that the coming of the Lord was announced to Adam and Eve (cfr Gn 3:8). This blessing is a welcome substitute for the Israelites.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> cfr R.B.Y. Scott, “Dew”, in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible – An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Nashville/NewYork: Abingdon Press 1962, Vol 1, p. 839.

<sup>25</sup>cf. Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis – A New Reading*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1977, p. 304.

<sup>26</sup> cf. R.B.Y. Scott, “Palestine, Climate of”, in: *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible – An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press 1962, Vol. 3, pp 622 f.

2) In the Exodus tradition, the manna and dew fell together in the quiet night (cfr Nb 11:9). The promised land is described as being rained upon by the dew from heaven (cfr Dt 33:28), with a special portion for Joseph (v. 33).

3) In Israel's history, the absence of both rain and the dew are closely associated with death. David's elegy over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan seems to be an indication of a "Lamentation Liturgy (QINA) – where the hero's shield was dishonored, the fields throughout were thought of as "treacherous", and on these no rain or dew must fall (cfr 2 S 1:21). With the 'flower of Israel' cut off, the young have fallen in battle (cfr Ps 90). Jeremiah also offers a kind of dirge on Death (cfr Jr 9:20, f.) – the corporate personality of Israel is emphasized.<sup>27</sup>

4) In the times of the Kings and Prophets, the absence and presence of water were the indication of the Lord's "absence and presence". Elijah prophesied that there would be a terrible drought: the Lord himself would hold back both the rain and the dew (cfr 1 K 17:1). The "rainy season" (November to March) was vital, and the dew alone, without this support, would never have been enough. Tradition has stated that the terrible drought lasts just half of the apocalyptic era, three and one half years (cfr Lk 4:25), half of a "sabbatical". If drought were really total for such time, it would indeed wreak havoc on all life. The nature gods of the ancient Middle East were rejected by Elijah, and he presents the Lord Yahweh as the Sovereign of the waters on, as well as above, the earth (cfr 1 K 18:1).<sup>28</sup>

a) The dew is associated with new life, either physical or spiritual. Through Hosea, the Lord promises to fall upon His People like dew (cfr ho 14:6). This passage introduces what is called "The Healing of Spontaneous (Divine) Love". There is an urgent prophetic call to come back to the Lord, backed by abundant theriomorphic imagery: God is presented as a lion, leopard, an angry she-bear (cfr Ho 5:14; 13:7, ff.). The wrath of such animals would be a figure of the destruction of life and development (cfr Dt 33:13).

b) Hoseah had previously spoken of the death of Israel (cfr ho 13:1, f. 8; 14:1), and so the image of the life-giving dew is not indifferent – in a passage from Isaiah, there is a promise of new life. The dew is presented as "radiant", and the ghosts will come to life (cfr Is 26:19). The dew will make Israel flourish like a lily, even in the harsh desert valleys, and will not be choked by the thorn bushes (cfr 1 K 7:26; Sgs 2:1, 16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2, 3; 7:3). The love of God bestows new life continuously – the spring lily celebrates new life, the beauty of a promising future. The persistence of the plant is a sign of the permanence of the new creation to come

---

<sup>27</sup> cfr. H. W. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel. OT Library*. London: SCM Press Ltd. 1964, (translated from the German by John Bowden) pp. 236, ff.

<sup>28</sup> cf. John Gray, *I and II Kings. OT Library*. London: SCM Press, Ltd. 2<sup>nd</sup> Impression 1980, pp 377, ff.



into being. The lily is a constant theme of Israel's love songs (cfr 1 K 5:28; Ps 29:5; 92:13; 104:16; Is 2:13).<sup>29</sup>

c) After the exile, the prophets complained that the returnees spent more time on their own homes than they did on the Lord's: so, the rain, or the dew, was withheld (cfr Hag 1:10). Haggai saw a direct relationship between the harsh situation of the exiles who had come home, and their neglect of God's House. The real poverty of Israel was the fact that they simply did not have the Lord in view. Perhaps all of this was a distant preparation to seek first the reign of the Lord, and all else would be added (cfr Mt 6:33).<sup>30</sup>

d) Haggai was probably a child of the Exile in Babylonia, and was nurtured with the burning desire to return to the homeland of his ancestors, to rebuild the Temple. His stirring voice moved the people toward this ideal, rejecting the mentality that had already lost hope. While the level of enthusiasm that Haggai inspired did not remain, nonetheless his hope for the future had a positive effect.<sup>31</sup>

e) Zechariah's vision for the future offered a most promising prospect for messianic salvation. Through him, the Lord promised universal peace, fruitful vines, a productive earth, and heavenly dew (cfr Zc 8:12). It has been noted that this chapter of Zechariah is composed of a number of short passages, and almost all of them refer to the messianic times. This will be a time of "bucolic" peace, a time of enjoyment of the simple blessings of the Lord. These first eight chapters of Zechariah pertain to what is called "First Zechariah", a period of transition from prophetic writings to the apocalyptic style. This latter movement has left its traces in the OT and perhaps peeks in the NT book by that time. The "last things" are presented with picturesque language and symbolism. I-Zechariah presents a "God of Hope". The exiles will all come home some day. The height of the blessings of the Messianic age will be the unbelievable realization of the Emmanuel.<sup>32</sup> Zechariah would be a great martyr of hope – and like Stephen after him, would be stoned to death. Chapter 8 contains the prophet's dream of the restoration of the city.<sup>33</sup>

## 5) And finally, the Wisdom tradition:

I.) a) Job describes his former happiness as being the measure of what would always be hit lot. In his prosperity he believed he would live as long as the palm tree, his roots drinking the deep waters, and his life refreshed by the night dew (cfr Jb 29:18, ff.). The "friends" of Job were steeped in the juridical aspects of the Covenant, but had missed the great sense of mercy of God, even before sin: the Lord knowing in depth his creature made of dust (cfr Ps 103:13, f.).

<sup>29</sup> cf. H.H. Wolff, *Hosea, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. (Translated by Gary Stansell) Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1974, pp. 231-238.*

<sup>30</sup> cf. S. Winnward, *A Guide to the Prophets.* Atlanta: John Knox Press 1968, pp. 193-195.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. B. R. Youngman, *The Challenge of the Prophets.* Middlesex: Nelso 1978, pp. 157-162.

<sup>32</sup> S. Winnward, *A Guide to the Prophets,* ibid., pp. 196-202.

<sup>33</sup> cf. B. R. Youngman, *The Challenge of the Prophets,* pp. 162-165.

Job desperately sought some kind of understandable pattern – this was the ultimate surrender, the total abandonment that the Lord asked of him.<sup>34</sup>

II.) b) The unknown author of the Cantic of Canticles presents the Spouse coming for his beloved, with his hair covered with the dew of the night. One reading of this unusual expression is that the coming of the Lord, with the blessings of the night dew, implies the promise of eschatological abundance. Others read it much less imaginatively, and understand the passage rather blandly, with the beloved asking to come in after an evening walk. The Apocalypse seems to find eucharistic overtones (cfr Rv 3:20).<sup>35</sup>

†††

(1) In the cosmic cantic of Daniel, the waters are invited to give praise to the Lord. This Hymn of Creation enumerates the various kinds of waters: those above the heavens, those that fall to the earth – some in driving and cold sleet, the gentle dew that descends quietly. There is mention as well of the streams of waters that seem to bubble up, in a controlled way, from the sources underneath the earth (cfr Dn 3:60, 64, 65, 68, 77, 78): all of this is in accord with the ancient idea of the created universe. The waters above the earth would flood it at the opening of the sluice gates (cfr Gn 6:11, f.) as well as the springs of the great deep which broke through.

(2) In **the Hymn to the Lord of the Storm** (cfr Ps 29), the voice of the Lord roars out its message over the waters. The believer is invited to trust in this awesome power of the Sovereign of the waters, the One Who uses the unruly abyss to refresh His city (cfr Ps 46:1, ff.). There is almost a description of a return to Eden and the Garden of delights, because of the abundant rains, maybe a Cantic for Tabernacles (cfr Ps 65:9, ff.) – the seasonal rains being a sign of the divine “presence”. This sovereignty of the Lord over the waters: in the ocean, in the depths, His raising up the clouds – all of this is reason to believe in the greatness of the Lord (cfr Ps 135:6, ff.). In His creative power, He has set the earth over the waters (cfr Ps 135:5, ff.). The universe is invited to sing its gratitude to the cycle of life: to be consumed by the animals, who in return provide food for humanity (cfr Ps 147:7, f.).

The various levels of creation praise the Lord: the waters above the heavens, the deeps, the hail, snow and mist (cfr Ps 146:3, 4, 7, 8).

†††

---

<sup>34</sup> cf. Dermot Cox, OFM, *The Truth of Impotence*. Rome: Gregorian University Press 1978, pp. 100, f.

<sup>35</sup> cfr. D. Lys, *La plus belle chant de la creation. Commentaire du Cantique des Cantiques*. Paris: du Cerf 1968, pp. 206, f.

Hence, the role of water in the Old Testament<sup>36</sup> as well as the New Testament, was used by Pope Pius XII to introduce his Encyclical Letter on the three-fold love of God expressed in Jesus Christ: sensitive, human and divine. In an ancient prophecy, the new times were described: the People of God will draw from the streams of salvation in great joy (cfr Is 12:3).

†††

## II. Three points will be considered:

- Water and Life
- The Source of Living Waters
- The Living Waters restore Creation

†††

### [A] WATER AND LIFE

There is evident in the Lord's word that He can control the unruly torrents – as well as bring water from His storehouses in the time of drought. This image was used to communicate the ancient humanity God's mercy over the changing events of history.

In this section, five points will be considered:

- I.) Present at Creation
- II.) Divine Sovereignty
- III.) Two Effects of Living Water
  - (A) The Source of Life
  - (B) Its Cleansing Power
- IV.) An Autumn Liturgy
- V.) Tabernacles in John

## I.) THE PRESENCE OF WATER IN THE CREATION STORIES

a. Sacred Scripture begins with the presence of God already as performing a task in the interests of weak humanity, in bringing life out of chaos, in making possibility out of confusion. Whether the image is that of a bird, nestling over a cosmic egg, at the right moment, to bring life out of the closed shell; or as an eagle, hovering over the nest trying to draw the newly born to higher levels (cfr Ex 19:4; Dt 32:11) – the creation scene is one of great power in the presence of helplessness.<sup>37</sup>

b. Once the power of God, sent out as His spirit and word had brought peace to the turbulence, the earth came alive, the sea teemed with life, the birds flew above, and every kind of creature seems to appear on the land (cfr Gn 1:11, ff.). In this

<sup>36</sup> P. Reymond, "L'eau, sa vie et sa signification dans l'AT", in : *SVT* 6, Leider 1958.

<sup>37</sup> cf. Louis Bouyer, *Le Consolateur. Esprit-Saint et vie de grace*. Paris: du Cerf 1980, pp. 37, ff.

sense, the first book is called “Genesis”, in that in some way, all was generated, brought into being by God. The ideas of the earth and sea as “womb” may be implicit here. So, at the sending out of the word and spirit of God, the earth and sea brought forth life in abundance.

c. In the second creation account, the emphasis is different (cfr Gn 2:5-25): there was no rain, nothing was growing. In His infinite power, a flood arose up out of the earth, from those waters under it. Once the soil was irrigated by this water, God Himself planted the garden – as much later, He would plant His vineyard (cfr Is 5:1, ff.). The unleashing of the waters bear eloquent testimony to the power of God. The earth itself, in its winds and floods, praises the Lord in this cosmic concert.

1) In both creation stories, the Lord manifests His sovereignty over life: in the first creation story (which is really the second!), His breath and word control the awesome abyss, so that life could be. In the second creation story, He brought water to the parched soil, so that an oasis, a “Garden of God” might come into being.

2) The “twin testimony” of God’s presence are nature and history – the latter is sung in Psalm 105, “The Wonderful History of Israel”, her “sacred memories.” Psalm 104, though, is a magnificent canticle on the creation. A close comparison might be made with the order of creation as this is made manifest in Gn 1. Psalm 104 is indeed a veritable “Canticle of Creation”.

3) Other “Creation Psalms” are like it (cfr Pss 9; 19; 29) – and later, the “Canticle of the Sun” would be reminiscent of these glories.<sup>38</sup> The hymn in Daniel 3 (vv. 51-90) is a canticle of praise on the part of creation, in descending order, beginning with what is above the earth, comes down upon it, what is upon it.

d. The Creation Psalm 104 shows the awesome power of the Creator. His Word, His Spirit, established all that is contained in the universe. Much praise is given to divine Wisdom and Goodness. His power is seen dominating over the elements above the earth, “the heavens are stretched like a tent”, the clouds are His chariots, the winds his messengers. Then coming down to earth, this is firmly established on its foundations; all is contained within its limits. There is a balance of nature, the moon tells the seasons. There is extraordinary variety in the sea, and all creatures depend on the Lord – this is indeed worthy of the highest praise. There is a kind of continuing creation in the extraordinary Providence with which the Lord governs the universe.

1) There seems to be fascination with the presence of the powerful waters, all under control: the waters above, upon which He has constructed His palace (v.3). Then there is the “vast expanse” of the ocean, teeming with all kinds of life. The ancient cosmology saw waters above the skies, as well as underneath: the

---

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Eloi Leclerc, OFM, *St. Francis of Assisi. The Canticle of Creatures. Symbols of Union. An Analysis.* Translated by M.J. O’Connell. Chicago: The Franciscan Herald Press 1970.

earth “rested” on water (cfr Gn 49:25; Ex 20:4; Ps 24:2; Rv 5:13; 10:6; 14:7).<sup>39</sup> The idealized description of the promised land offered by the Deuteronomist follows immediately the description of the awesome ordeal in the desert. The Promised Land is described as “a land of water-springs” that well up from underneath (cfr Dt 8:7, ff.).

2) This beautiful description is not unlike the biblical view of Eden, and the Promised Land is almost like coming “home” from the “exile” imposed after the first sin (cfr Gn 3:24).

3) Sometimes the sluice gates would be opened, as in punishment at the time of the deluge (cfr Gn 6:5, ff.). Simultaneously, all the springs of the great deep broke through. With the Covenant of Peace, signified by the rainbow (cfr Gn 9:12, ff.), the Lord is presented in His calm sovereignty, holding back the waters, and distributing them as needed. The oceans are seen to be a robe for the land; the deep being of greater depth than the highest mountains (cfr Ps 104:6, f.).

4) In the imagery which is offered here, there is offered a scene of original peace: there is fresh water in the ravines for all the wild animals, and the cedars obtain sufficient rain. The birds come and make their nests, a sign of new life, a new springtime (vv. 16, ff.). In one of the “Pilgrimage Songs”, an unknown Psalmist has captured his memory of the Temple – in which sparrows and the swallows have found fitting place for their nests, a symbol perhaps for the mystical soul of Israel (cfr Ps 84:3).

5) There is much emphasis on the balance in nature: the palace of the Lord above the heavenly waters sends just enough to provide feed for the cattle, and those vegetables needed for a balanced diet: there is specific mention of the wine (to make them happy), and the bread – to make them strong (cfr Ps 104:13, ff.). An old injunction is being fulfilled by nature. In creating, the Lord said: be fruitful, multiply. The order was given to fill the universe with life: the sea, the sky, the land. In the creation scene, the Lord is presented as provident Sovereign (cfr Gn 1:28, ff.).

6) This is a poetic presentation of a loving Providence. The seasonal rains nourish the thirsty ground (cfr Gn 1:11, f.; 29, f.; 3:18; 9:3; Ps 147:8, f.). After the sin, there was a relatively harsh command: the sweat of the brow in order to survive and childbearing with some pain. At the same time, the Creator shows Himself to be “Emmanuel”: the harvests are not solely the result of this “sweat”, nor is the increase merely the result of one’s own pain. Every harvest celebrates a “New Creation”, once more there is “proof” that the Lord kept His word, in leading His special people to the land of milk and honey. The annual marvel provides what is really necessary for life.

---

<sup>39</sup> cf. The diagram, in: St. Joseph’s Edition of *The American Bible*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., facing p. 5; also *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible. OT Illustrations*. Cambridge: University Press 1971, p 26, f.

7) This wonder is celebrated through scripture: the Lord feeds His people on the yield of the mountains, with honey, oil, curds, milk – the rich food of the land (cfr Dt 32:12, ff.; cfr also Dt 12:17).

e. Three elements come in for special mention:

1) **the Bread**: surely one of the worldwide “staples”. (cfr desert manna) For religious minded peoples, it almost has a sacred character: it was the bread from heaven”, the “bread of emergency, or of wisdom”, with which the Lord fed His people during the long desert sojourn.

2) **the Wine**: the grapes and their harvest, are an important product of the Promised Land. To show abundance of this land to which the Lord was leading them, the “spies” who reconnoitered the land came back with grapes and other products of the land. The wind also served as a symbol of good times, the abundant harvest. It is a blessing and brings joy (cfr Si 31:27, f.; 39:26; Jgs 9:13; Ps 4:8).

3) **the Oil**: used as a condiment, and also for the healing of wounds.

f. One can only wonder whether the creation stories, and their celebration through history, were not most intimately associated with the Feast of Ingathering. In the times of the monarchy, this was Israel’s major festival. This would imply the beginning of the new year of renewed life. The harvest “proved” the Lord keeps His word – He renews the great marvel of the land of milk and honey.

1) **Psalm 104** also shows what it would be if the Lord should “turn away”. This psalm contains the well known versicle and response: “You send forth your spirit (or ‘breath’) and all is created, and the face of the earth is renewed” (cfr v. 30). It is the breath of God, blown into the dust, the giving back of one’s spirit (cfr Gn 3:19). Job sees death as God “recalling His breath” – his withdrawing breath back into Himself (Jb 34:14). This would mean that all would perish. Times of famine and drought were an indication of this. Psalm 104, and so many other passages, show the Lord’s fidelity in the harvest.<sup>40</sup>

g. The Lord “Adonai” is invoked as the Creator of all the universe: the same praise is attributed to Jesus as Lord (cfr Ps 104; and Heb 1:100. the absolute Lordship of God the Father over creation is applied then to Jesus Christ as “Lord” of all after His resurrection (cfr Ac 17:24-31: 2:20, f.; 3:20). Creation is seen as the full giving of God to humanity in the glorification of Jesus. When God communicates life to human beings, He gives something precious of Himself. Through life, the Lord makes a pledge of giving more of Himself, in extending life forever. Creation is seen as an act of divine love, that flows from His infinitely free will.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Coeur de l’homme – Etude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale*. Belgique: Ducolat 1979, Vol 3, pp. 49-113, passim.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. S. Verges, *Dios y el hombre – La Creacion*. Madrid: BAC 1980, pp. 289, f.

h. Not infrequently biblical personalities complain from the depths of their misery against the loving Providence of God. Elijah wishes he were dead (cfr 1 K 19:4); but the Lord comforted him and offered refreshment and instruction. Jeremiah felt he had been “seduced” (cfr Jr 20:7) – but the Lord asks him to come back, and to say only “wise” things. Job struggles with the infinite wisdom of God, Who responds with a barrage of difficult questions on the wonder of creation (cfr Jb 38). Job is eventually persuaded to surrender his own judgment to the loving wisdom of God. Weakness triumphs in the power of God.<sup>42</sup>

†††

## II.) DIVINE MASTERY OVER THE WATERS

a. The “sacred memories” of this divine sovereignty over water was celebrated in the Exodus story, and the wonder of the two creation stories. The Lord shows Himself to be the Master of all Creation throughout sacred history: but this is dramatically seen in His command over the waters. In its torrential power, water is shown as an instrument of havoc and destruction. The Lord’s power over the unruly torrents is presented basically as His loving care for His people.

b. Sometimes the psalmists felt “engulfed” by the present troubles, the waters being up to their necks. And they would pray out to the Lord for his gentle, saving hand (cfr Ps 42-43:7; 69:2; 88:6, ff.). In this “personal deluge”, the compassion of God reaches out to His faithful ones.

c. Throughout Israel’s subsequent history, the Rescue in the Sea was extolled by the bards of liturgy.

1) The crossing of the forbidding sea was re-lived in the annual celebration of the birth of the people. This was “remembered, recalled and re-presented” down through the generations. This “sacred memory” was the source of Israel’s unshaken faith in the Emmanuel, God indeed was with His people. The deliverance from the sea is a kind of Hymn of Thanksgiving (cfr Ex 15:1, ff.). This would be remembered again at the far end of Scripture in the Apocalypse, as “The Song of Moses and the Lamb” (cfr Rv 15). The whole final section of the Book of Wisdom (cfr cc. 11-18) is a kind of Midrash, pondering the extraordinary mastery of God over the hostile elements in the life of Israel: the desert, the darkness and the deep.

2) This miracle of the sea is also found in the Book of Judges. The “passing over” into the promised land is accompanied by divine sovereignty over the waters. This time the Jordan “took flight”, precisely in the season perhaps when the river would be overflowing its banks (cfr Jgs 3:14, ff.). As soon as the feet of the priests carrying the Ark touched the waters, they gave way, making a kind of

---

<sup>42</sup> cf. Dermot Cox, OFM, *The Triumph of Impotence – Job and the Tradition of the Absurd*. Rome: Universitas Pontificia Gregoriana 1978.

“highway” for the Ark of the Covenant. This seems to be a “mini-repetition” of what had happened earlier in the life of Moses (cfr Ex 15:15-31). As the Lord had been with Moses in the desert, so, too, will He be with Joshua and the descendants of the desert generations.

3) All of this will be repeated still again, in the distant centuries – only, it will be far greater than anything that ever happened before. Perhaps 700 years later, the anonymous prophet, known to us as Deutero-Isaiah, tells us that to find the “wonders of God” it is not necessary to go back over the ancient traditions of the dim past. All that was done before will “pale” before these new deeds. This new people, “liberated and re-created”, has been formed precisely to sing His praises. Second Isaiah speaks of a New Exodus (cfr Is 41:17-20; 43:16, ff). But this new “redemption” will be so great, and will have such profound effects, that it would be compared to a brand new universe, a new creation – far greater than anything that had ever happened before. The Creator will be the spouse of this people, the Holy One is the Redeemer, He is the God of all the universe (cfr Is 54:4, ff).

d. God’s mastery over the waters was exercised in three separate occasions, closely associated with Israel’s redemption: The Exodus, the coming of Joshua and the people of God into the Promised Land, and the rather vague promise of a new miracle, (Il-Is) which will be the greatest yet, the return from the Babylonian captivity.

1) Redemption is creative, and creation is redemptive: it is all a part of the great story of salvation. These sacred memories instilled ever new hope into the Israelites – the “Memorial” that was celebrated down through the generations, kept alive the hope.

2) Jeremiah would use this mastery of the Lord over the elements – not allowing the water to surpass its boundaries, even though it might roar awesomely – to inspire one to come to the Lord, to worship this Lord Who gives the early and later rains, always at the right time. He is the one who makes sure of the weeks appointed for the harvest (cfr Jr 5:22, ff.).

3) In times of drought, and in need of the waters, the prayer would go out to Him: the heavens cannot produce the showers, this is certain. It is the Lord, the hope of Israel, Who will send the rain in due season (cfr Jr 14:21, ff.).

e. A rather simple equation formed in the minds of the ancients: as God was the undisputed Sovereign of the Waters, and of all of nature, this mastery flowed over into the events of History. This creative power is particularly evident in the seasonal rains. The Lord is still present, when the skies turn into “bronze”, and the earth into iron, at the time of drought. The years in the desert were meant to be read as the lesson of a loving Father. Behind the drought, the Israelites were asked to repent, change their ways. It is by his power that the Lord has established the earth. The thunder is the sign of the tumult in the sky. The clouds come up from the boundaries of the earth, and the lightning signals the downpour (cfr Jr 1:12, ff.).



f. There is a kind of liturgical cadence to the creation story – it begins with the vigil of the night before: evening came and then morning came, as the days succeeded one another, in the testimony of the power of the creator. With the night and its darkness, the soul of Israel would cry its “De Profundis”: “out of the depths, I cry to the Lord.” My soul will rely on the Lord, even more than a watchman scanning the distant eastern horizon for the first glimpse of a new day (cfr Ps 130).

g. To the Lord, “nothing is impossible” – is the arm of the Lord too short for anything? This divine “possibility” was noted by Jeremiah under the symbol of the “outstretched arms”. These symbols of power extended the heavens and the earth, and also led the people of God from captivity. This power brought Israel to the land of milk and honey (cfr Jr 32:17, ff.). The prophet joins the greater wonders of creation and redemption.

h. Jesus himself would later show this mastery over the chaos – by calming the winds and the seas (cfr Mt 8:23, ff.; Mk 4:35, ff.; Lk 8:22, ff.). He would easily walk on the waves (cfr Mt 14:22, ff.; Mk 6:45.; Jn 6:16-21; 21:7).<sup>43</sup>

i. In the simple faith of the times, water was thought simply as under the control of God, and its controlled appearance was seen as one of His choicest blessings. Israel would be blessed with the “living waters”, in their fidelity to their Covenant with God. The creative and redemptive power of God is manifest in His sovereignty over by the abyss – in the generations that lie still in the future, the “good times” will be seen under the image of Israel being able to draw water joyfully from the streams of salvation (cfr Is 12:3).

†††

### III.) TWO EFFECTS OF LIVING WATER:

#### a.) THE SOURCE OF LIFE

The raging primordial abyss was a concept that Israel never forgot – nor, the awesome power needed to control it. A kind of fear of the water is still present in the “sea” or “Lake” stories of the NT. Pauls’ idea of “cosmic hope” (cfr Rm 8), with all of creation groaning in one great act of giving birth, surely took some of its inspiration from the early creation story. Water is associated with a variety of aspects of “life”:

##### 1. Water as the Principle of Life

a. Water is a kind of bed, out of which life arises. The second creation story (cfr Gn 2:5, ff) saw the source of all water flow in and through the Garden of Eden, a kind of oasis in the midst of desert surroundings.

---

<sup>43</sup> cf. Georges Auzou, *Au commencement Dieu crea le monde – l’histoire et la foi*. “Lire la Bible”, 36. Paris: du Cerf, pp 93-100; cfr. Also J. Gaillard, “Eau”, in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite Ascetique et Mystique. Doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne 1960, Vol IV/1, col. 9-29, passim.

b. Even the Jordan was seen with a kind of broad view: when Abraham and Lot separated, Lot is given hope that the Jordan plain was irrigated everywhere (cfr Gn 13:10).

c. In Balaam's oracle, he poetically described his vision of the wilderness. With his "far-seeing eyes", he thought of Israel like immense gardens on the banks of streams, with great trees drawing on these waters (cfr Nb 24:3, ff.).

d. Along with his physical life, water also served in some way as the example of nourishment by the Lord of the spirit, the mind and heart of the believer.

e. In the wisdom tradition, water is often presented even before "bread" among the necessities of life. It is offered as a sign of hospitality (cfr Rt 2:19). Water is intimately associated with the concept of "new life".<sup>44</sup>

## 2. Water as the Principle of "New" Life, new beginnings:

a. For the wandering Bedouin, water served as a place of encounter. In the desert, a vast and awesome place, all roads, sooner or later, led to the oasis, to the water supply (cfr 1 S 19:22).

b. A brief resume of the broad function served by the wells of Scripture might be:

- meetings with God (cfr Gn 21:15, ff.; 26:15, ff.).
- marriages (cfr Gn 24:11, ff.; 29:2; Ex 2:15, ff.);
- covenants in general (cfr Jgs 5:11, 15, ff.).
- law-suits.

c. The Book of Numbers seems to be a carefully detailed "travelogue", showing the journey of the Israelites, with some exactness. The whole journey is shown to be a record of the wandering between the water holes found along the route of the terrible journey. There is solid reason to believe that the ancient caravans could very well have followed these water holes (cfr Nb 20:2, ff., 17; 21:5, 16, ff., 22; 33:14).

d. The Israelites stay at Kadesh, which was a rather exclusive oasis in the middle of the desert, seems to have been an attraction because of its abundant water. The laconic announcement of Numbers seems to support this: as soon as they had set out again, there was no water (cfr Nb 20:2). There are not lacking indications that Israel's stay at Kadesh was a long one: it was "many a day, the full tally of days" (cfr Dt 1:46).<sup>45</sup>

3. Water was the sign of abundant life: in a land where water was most important, it was seen as the sign of God's blessings:

---

<sup>44</sup> cf. J. Gaillard, col. 9, ff.

<sup>45</sup> J. DeVaulx, *Les Nombres. Sources Bibliques*. Paris; Gabalda: 1972, p. 23.

- it was a symbol of happiness (cfr Jb 29:23; Ps 23:1-3; 73:10);
- it implied domestic joy (cfr Pr 5:15, f.; Sgs 4:12, 15);
- it implied that God indeed was with his people. The valleys would be “blessed” by the early rains (cfr Ps 84:7). God’s blessings indeed soak like a flood (cfr Si 39:22).
- the ANAWIM, the anonymous lowly and faithful, are compared to the tree planted by the streams of the living water (cfr Ps 1:3).<sup>46</sup>

†††

## **b.] WATER THAT CLEANSSES**

### **Introduction**

(1) Water is the basic cleansing agent. Along with the sign of His “marvelous condescension”, God came to humanity in sovereign control over the awesome waters, and also in the seasonal bestowal of the gentle rains. He also came as a purifying power.

(a) In the ancient rituals, many ablutions were required before coming near to the Lord – even the simplest practices of hygiene assumed certain features of ritual.

(b) The basic principle behind it was that the cleansing waters in some way, “raised” one up, or made one “less unworthy” to approach the All Holy.

(2) Within the Book of Leviticus, there may be found the “Holiness Code” (cfr Lv 17-26), and its basic principle is: “Be holy (merciful), for the Lord Himself is Holy (cfr Lv 19:2).

(a) The Book of Leviticus is not unlike the “Pontificalis”, including a ceremonial for the high priest. The Israelites were “consecrated”, a royal, priestly people (cfr Ex 19:6), so in coming close to the All Holy, they were early accustomed to the ritual of purification. Moses was told to instruct the people to get ready for the third day, when the Lord would descend on to the mountain. There was the injunction to wash their clothes – and the priests who were to approach the Lord were included in this rule (cfr Ex 19:10, f., 22).

(b) Leviticus spells out a variety of reasons for purification – so many situations could render one “unclean”, prior to the sacrificial bath which Jesus brought, that overcame all of these. In many cases, water was enough to remove the impurities (cfr Lv 11:25-40, *passim*). For the more serious offenses and infidelities to

---

<sup>46</sup> cfr. J. Gaillard.

the Covenant, there was needed the sacrifice of a victim, and the offering of blood, the principle of life.<sup>47</sup>

(c) In the most solemn ceremonies, ablutions were part of the ritual for the holocausts (cfr Lv 1:9, ff.). In the consecration of high priests, the ritual bath was presupposed (cfr Ex 29:4; 40:12). The bath was also required before the exercise of the functions of the High Priest (cfr Ex 30:19, ff.) and there was special emphasis given to his preparation for the Day of Atonement (cfr Lv 16:4).

(3) On the high altar of Solomon's Temple was placed what has been called the "Bronze Sea" (cfr 1 K 7:23-26), which held two (or three) thousand baths (cfr 2 Ch 4:5).

(a) This must have been immense and was held in place on a stand, of four groups of three oxen, pointed in the four directions of the compass. The reason given for the "Bronze Sea" is a very pragmatic one – it was for the washings of the priests (cfr 2 Ch 4:6).

(b) However, some interpreters see "cosmic purposes", the water representing the waters of the universe. Perhaps liturgically, too, there was a representation of the calming of the waters at creation. Given the size of the basin, it would have been difficult to enter it. Others see in it a representation of the sacred lake of the ancient temples of the Middle East. The oxen might have been a fertility sign.<sup>48</sup>

### Summary

Water, then, served as a symbol of the presence of the Most High. Throughout a long history, water purified Israel – it brought the believer into contact with the One Who had dominated the chaos of primordial darkness; the One Who had divided the Sea to allow His chosen ones to cross; the Lord Whose presence separated the spring rush of the Jordan, so that His people could come into the Promised Land. With the Babylonian Exile (cfr Ps 137) and the coming home of the "remnant" – all this merely celebrated externally what had happened interiorly. Water served as a symbol of new life.

†††

1. The well-known **Miserere** is a fervent prayer asking for pardon, purification, reconciliation – mercy. This is the prayer of an admitted sinner, who has repented, and is now asking for the mercy of the Most High. The "pardon" that is being sought is not some merely external correction, but a profound regeneration, re-creation of mind and heart.

---

<sup>47</sup> cf. Roland DeVaux, OP, *Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions*. Translated by John McHugh. London: Darton, Longman and Todd. 3<sup>rd</sup> Impression 1976, pp. 415, ff.

<sup>48</sup> cf. J. L. Mihelic, "Sea", in: *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible – An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press 1962, Vol 4, pp. 252, ff. cfr. Also Andre Parrot, *Il tempio di Gerusalemme*. Translated from the French by Lino Viglucci, of Camaldoli. Roma: Edizioni Paoline 1973, pp. 34-36.

a. This poem is written in the style of the great prophets: Isaiah had compared sin to the color scarlet, and the Lord promised a restoration (cfr Is 1:18). In the prophecy of the “New Covenant”, the Lord promised that the believers would be given a “new heart” so that they could indeed acknowledge the Lord in his mercy. This new and different heart of which Jeremiah speaks (cfr Jr 32:39) becomes then one of the symbols that Ezechiel will use to describe his rendition of the new Covenant (cfr Ezk 11:19; 16:59, ff.; 18:31; 22:17, ff.; 36:7, ff., 24, ff.).

b. Along with the prophetic influence, the priestly tradition might also be noted. The Psalms spoke of the ritual purifications: Psalm 26 speaks of the washing of one’s hands among the innocent, a washing that indeed was an act of religion (cfr Ps 24; 50; 73:13; Gn 20:5; Dt 21:6, ff.; Is 1:16; Mt 27:24). It is only after these ablutions have been carried out that the ceremonies continue then with added fervor. The ritual of ablutions is closely tied to the ancient ceremonial (cfr 1 S 1:3, 21, ff.; 1 K 8:31, ff. ; 18:26; Ps 42:5; 118:27).<sup>49</sup> The priestly influence seems present in the mention of the hyssop, commonly used in the asperges ceremonial (cfr Ex 29:36; Lv 8:156; 14:49, 52; Nb 19:19; Dt 24:4; Ezk 43:20, 22, 23; 45:18).

c. In the opening expressions, interpreters find three words describing the mercy of God (mercy, goodness and tenderness); three words for human sin (faults, guilt and sin); and three verbs for forgiveness (wipe away, wash me clean, purify me).

Of particular interest for any reflection on “Symbols of Mercy” would be the words employed to describe God:

1) - “condescendence”: in its Latin root, descending to be with, as applied to God. This is one who bends toward someone else, offering help, protection, to one lacking independence. Applied to God, this would be the grace, favor that is communicated (cfr ps 6:3; 41:5; 67:2; 102:14).

2) - HESED: this is sometimes rendered by “covenant love”, one that does ask for a mutual expression, or relationship. It is used in the nuptial symbolism and Jeremiah applies it as a characteristic of the love that God always directs toward Israel: an everlasting, constant love and affection (cfr Jr 31:4). So many times, the ancient biblical names are professions of faith, or of hope. One such name, found in the Chronicler, anticipates the extraordinary revelation of John, “God is love” (cfr 1 Jn 4:8, 16). In among the lesser personalities of the royal line, following the exile, there was one person called Hasadiah, meaning, God is love (cfr 1 ch 3:20).

3) - “tenderness”: this is the word that is derived from the Hebrew for “womb”. In some forms, it is simply the word for a “mother’s love”. This is a relationship that is always faithful, delicate and perhaps hardly ever returned to the level that it is offered. It is expressed as concern and warmth, for as long as life lasts (cfr Ho 1:6, f; 2:3, 6, 21, 25; 14:4; is 30:18; 49:15; Jr 12:15; 30:18; 31:20; 33:26;

---

<sup>49</sup> f. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Cœur de l’homme*, ibid., Vol 1, pp. 596, ff.

42:12). It is in the sense of Hoseah, that the Lord promises to love with ALL his heart (cfr Ho 14:4).

d. The Israelites are indeed the “People of the Promise” – but likewise, in them, divine Mercy (“misericordia”) and human misery (“Miseria”) meet.

e. The Miserere is the prayer for a New Covenant: the Psalmist dares to think of a “New Creation”. The same power that drew the universe up out of original chaos – and that drew Israel up out of the Sea of Reeds and enabled the Ark of the Covenant at the head of God’s people to cross the Jordan: is here invoked (cfr Jr 24:7; 31:233; 32:39; Ezk 11:19; 36:25, ff.). The bestowal of a new heart ushers in a new era, a new year, a new beginning. Creation and Tabernacles are intimately associated: the harvest of the preceding year led one to look ahead to future needs. Repentance was among the ingredients in the re-creation process of the believer. The renewal of a sinner is intimately associated with the power of Creation, as with its Restoration.

f. The conversion of the Miserere was not merely an external ritual of libation or ablution. There is prayed for, and offered, a conversion in the deepest core of one’s being. There is a prayer for a “new and constant spirit” (v.10). The Miserere likewise prays for joy, the happiness of being given a new chance, new life.<sup>50</sup>

2. The symbol of washing is very present in the New Testament. Three possible examples are:

a. The Sinful Woman washes the feet of Christ (cfr Lk 7:47). Rather than purifying Him, she is rendered clean by her contact with Christ.

b. The Samaritan woman (cfr Jn 4), as well as the woman who wanted to touch but the hem of His garment, offer us models of the Church. All four evangelists mention this fact of the sinful woman approaching Jesus as He reclined at dinner (cfr Mk 14:3, ff.; Mt 26:6, ff.; Jn 12:1, ff.). In this episode, the mystery of conversion is seen from both aspects: on the part of Jesus, mercy and compassion, grace had gone out of Him; the woman brings her profound spirit of loving humility.<sup>51</sup>

c. Jesus washes the feet of His disciples (cfr Jn 13:1, ff.): with this incident, the section of John’s Gospel, called the “Gospel of Glory” opens. Many find symbolic overtones of Jesus getting up from table (being raised on the Cross); washing the feet of His disciples (redeeming the world); going back to table (the resurrection). Jesus did perform a great act of humility, and also gave a lesson on authority. But He also prophesied symbolically that He was about to be humiliated in death - but that His humiliation would result in His own and the Father’s glorification. His death would mean the possibility of eternal life for those who would follow Him. This scene,

---

<sup>50</sup> cfr. L. Jacquet, *ibid*, vol 2, pp. 148-188, *passim*.

<sup>51</sup> cfr. Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, *The Gospel of Luke*. NT Reading Guide. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1964, pp. 71, ff.

repeated in the liturgy of Holy Thursday, is a symbolic dramatization of the scene on Calvary and the Resurrection.<sup>52</sup>

d. Jesus, Spouse of the Church, bathes her – by His sacrifice, He has made His Spouse holy; He has made her clean by this ritual bath (cfr Ep 5:25, ff.). Some interpreters have seen here an ancient nuptial bath; whereas many others believe these lines should be interpreted as referring to baptism.<sup>53</sup> This sacrament has received its efficacy by the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus.

1) Through this sacrament, one is transformed, “deified”, by a divine quality, offering a New Creation. This introduces one into the realm of God, Father, Son and Holy Trinity – and imparts the option of eternal life ... The “holiness” that is communicated is intimately associated with worship: the thought of God’s mercy will inspire the believer to make an offering, an oblation is meant to be “without blemish”. Offerings are acceptable to God in the sanctification by the Holy Spirit (cfr Rm 15:16).

2) The sacrificial nuptials of Jesus with His Church (cfr Ep 5:25, 27) brings together three ideas on holiness:

- that which is a pre-requisite for the Second Coming;
- that hoped for in one’s “intended”;
- that of the victims chosen for oblation to God.

3) The believing community, because of this sacrificial offering of Jesus, is seen as a Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is living within (cfr 1 Co 3:16, ff.). This magnificent Temple is still “growing”, “being built” into the Lord’s house (cfr Ep 2:19, ff.). This house of the Lord has Jesus for the cornerstone, and the Apostles and prophets for the foundations. We are temples of a living God (cfr 2 Co 6:16).

4) The Apocalypse also joins two rituals: the heavenly liturgy and the nuptials of the Lamb. By the streams of living water new life has come to the Church. It is in the “Parousia” that the nuptials of the Lamb and the Church will be complete. By accepting now the immolated Lamb, the Church will one day become the heavenly Assembly. For the time being, the Lamb of God has granted this sacrificial bath; and the word of God will render the nuptials eternal.<sup>54</sup>




---

<sup>52</sup> cfr. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel of John, XIII-XVI*. Anchor Bible 29/A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1970, pp. 545-572.

<sup>53</sup> cf. Ferdinand Prat, SJ. *The Theology of St. Paul*. Translated from the 10<sup>th</sup> French edition by John L. Stoddard. Westminster, MD: The Newman Bookshop 1961, Vol 2, p. 256.

<sup>54</sup> cfr. Lucien Cerfaux, *Le Christ dans la theologie de St. Paul*. Paris: 3d edition 1958, pp. 231, ff.

#### IV.) THE AUTUMN LITURGY OF WATER

1. In the fall of the year, the Israelites came to celebrate the Feast of Ingathering – also known as the Feast of Tents, Booths, or Tabernacles.

a. This Feast of the Harvest “at the end of the year” is the gathering in of the fruits of the long summer labor in the fields. The first fruits always belonged to the Lord (cfr Ez 23:14, ff.). It was a festival, not unlike the creation story of seven days, with each day offering a new blessing of the Lord. This festival of Tabernacles lasted for seven days, and was marked with a pervading sense of joy, gratitude. The believers would live in shelters during the harvest of the crops – thus simulating the way their ancestors had lived during the long trek across the desert (cfr Lv 23:33, ff.).

b. The great Ingathering was celebrated – it was a time of faith in the blessings of God, manifest in the Harvest. The produce was about to be gathered in, and all hearts were to be filled with joy (cfr Dt 16:13, ff.).

2. It is in this setting that some interpreters believe that there must have been an annual covenant renewal ceremony – even though the existence of such a festival is difficult to prove beyond any reasonable doubt. This feast of Sukkoth (ingathering) or “booths” (Asif) has left a profound impact on Israel’s sacred memories. This festival, every seven years, also served as the introduction of the Holy Year. In this special “sabbatical” year, on that Feast when all of Israel would come to “look on the face” of God, a whole year was set aside for “remission” (cfr Dt 31:9, ff.).

a. There was a connection with this Festival of the autumn, perhaps, and the dedication of the Temple of Solomon – the ceremony took place at the time of the THE Feast (cfr 1 K 8:1-15; 1 Ch 7:8, ff.).

b. At the return from Exile, the “remnant” gathered at the “old site” of the former Temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonian armies. For the “seventh month”, the Israelites gathered as “one” – and a great Festival of Tabernacles was celebrated (cfr Ezr 3:1, ff.).

c. Ezra had come from Babylon with the returning exiles and he promulgated the re-birth of God’s people: the people gathered in the square before the Water Gate. He read to all old enough to understand, from early morning until noon – and all the people listened attentively. He reminded them of the spirit of joy that should permeate the proceedings: “and there was great merry-making” (cfr Ne 7:73, ff.).

3. And the Books of Maccabees are also centered around a Feast of Tabernacles, in which the ritual of the Purification of the Temple was realized.

a. They kept eight days of festival, just as would be done for the Feast of Tabernacles. They were reminded of other Feasts of Tabernacles, when they were hiding away in the hills in the times of troubles and persecutions. All carried leafy branches and boughs – and it was decreed that this festival of purification should then be repeated each year (cfr 2 M 10:1, ff.).



b. This Second Book of the Maccabees opens with two letters written to their compatriots in “diaspora”, inviting them to come for the Feast of Dedication (cfr 2 M 1:1, f., 10, 18).

4. This feast came to be determined on an astronomical basis, either the autumnal equinox (cfr Ex 34:22), or the full moon. The major features of the festivities would be the taking in of the crops; special rituals asking for rainfall; and the living in trellis-covered cabins. The ceremonies for the rainfall seemed to be these: there was a procession each day from the pool of Siloam, perhaps carried through the Water Gate and brought into the Temple.<sup>55</sup>

a. The observance of the festival is noted also by four plants (citron, palm, myrtle and willow). These are waved harmoniously, in all directions, as the psalms and hymns are sung. All is done in thanksgiving, gratitude to God for His bounty in the harvest. The four plants represent all types of human beings.

b. The booths serve as a “memorial” of the abiding care of God during the years of the desert sojourn. These tents are seen most appropriate as a reminder of other times, particularly in a moment when people might be tempted to be self-sufficient in the abundance of the Ingathering. The Tent also further signifies a kind of hope when all will be enfolded into one family under God (cfr Zc 14:9). The dominant note of the week is exultant happiness – on the last day is observed the “Rejoicing of the Law”.<sup>56</sup>

5. This rapid survey of the Festival of the Harvest Joy in the Old Testament perhaps peaks in Zechariah’s idea. The festival throughout had been the occasion of so many instances of rejoicing in peace.<sup>57</sup> There were always the hope, the expectancy of a new year, a “new creation”.

a. In Zechariah’s dream of the “final times”, he sees all Israel coming home for a Feast of Ingathering. All who survive will join in the procession – even the horse bells will bear an inscription to show that they are sacred to Yahweh. Right down to the cooking pots, there will be evidence that all is now sacred, dedicated to God. There will be no evidence anymore of traders in the Temple (cfr Zc 14:16, ff).

b. Among the old blessings listed by the Deuteronomist for the keeping of the Covenant would be that the Lord would open up His rich treasure house. Insisting on keeping the Covenant “this day”, the promise was that there would be the

---

<sup>55</sup> cfr. Theodor H. Gaster, *Festivals of the Jewish Year. A Modern Interpretation and Guide*. New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks 1953, pp. 80, ff.

<sup>56</sup> cfr. Isidore Epstein, *Judaism. A Historical Presentation*. Great Britain: Penguin books 1979, pp. 172, f.; cfr. also W. Brueggemann, “Wave Offering”, in: *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible. An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press 1962, Vol 4, p. 817.

<sup>57</sup> cfr. Philip Goodman, *The Sukkot and Simhat Torah Anthology*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America 5733/1973, especially pp. 3-12.

seasonable rains (cfr Dt 28:9, ff.). The Book of Deuteronomy commemorates the Feast of Ingathering – or, at least, celebrates a kind of Liturgy of Covenant Renewal (cfr Dt 26-28). The goods of the harvest are kept before the eyes of the believers, reminding the Israelites that God indeed had kept His word. In the Covenant, the Lord in almost nuptial terms, promises to be the God of this people and asks them to be His very own people.<sup>58</sup>

c. The abundance of the seasonal rains was both celebrated in thanksgiving for the harvest which has just been taken in – and a fervent hope was offered for the new year that was about to begin. The harvest and its abundance was indeed a kind of “new creation”. Among the old curses for the infidelity to the Covenant may be found the poetic description of the “bronze sky” and the “iron soil” (cfr Dt 28:23), indications most likely of a long drought. Tabernacles was a time of limitless joyful thanksgiving, looking back of the past year – and great expectation for what might still be. The water festival, or a “rain dance” would not be unusual among an agricultural people. The Feast of Booths became the major festival in the time of the monarchy. The feast coincided with the expected beginning of the winter rains.

d. It is in the context of harvest joy that some interpreters theorize that there must have been the annual enthronement festival of the King, and perhaps a kind of Covenant renewal (texts sometimes indicated they are: Ps 47; 132; 2 S 6; 1 K 8). These texts, coupled with the rather detailed story of the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant from Shechem to Jerusalem, would offer an almost natural background possibility for such a festival (cfr 1 S 4-6, 2 S 6).<sup>59</sup>

e. Biblical scholars theorize that there must have been an original “ark source”, dating perhaps from the time when David moved the capital to Jerusalem. This establishment of the Throne of David was accompanied by a liturgical procession from Kiriath-Jearim. The house of one “Obed Edom” (“servant of the gods of Edom”) becomes particularly blessed by the presence of the ark. These passages seem to have had influence on Luke’s rendition of Mary’s visitation to Elizabeth (cfr Lk 1:39, ff.).<sup>60</sup>

6. There are some Psalms that seem to lend themselves to this ceremonial (or its later liturgical commemoration), the joyous procession with the Ark of the Covenant (cfr Pss 24; 47; 95; 99; 100; 118).<sup>61</sup>

a. The joy-filled week of Tabernacles seems to culminate in the renewal of the Covenant with the Lord. Looking at the abundance with which the Lord had

<sup>58</sup>cf. P. Duis and J. Leclercq, *Le Deuteronomie. Sources Bibliques*. Paris: Gabalda 1963, pp. 169-181. cfr also P. Buis, *Le Deuteronomie*. Verbum Salutis 4. Paris: Beauchesne 1969, pp. 372-382, passim.

<sup>59</sup> cf. H.W. Heutzeberg, *I & II Samuel. OT Library*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 5<sup>th</sup> impression 1979, pp. 45-64, 275-280.

<sup>60</sup> cf. Rene Laurentin, *Structure et theologie de Luc I & II*. Source Bibliques, Sieme edition. Paris: Gabalda et Cie. 1964, pp. 68-71, 79-81, 136, f., 151, 159-161.

<sup>61</sup> J. Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms. *Studies in Biblical Theology*, Second Series 32. London: SCM Press 1976.

blessed them (perhaps Pss 50; 81), the believers were moved to renew their commitments to the Lord. All of creation seems “saved”, “delivered” in the harvest – God’s tireless creative power has dominated once more over all of the elements hostile to the produce: excessive sun, wind, rain. The primordial chaos has been defeated one more time, to produce this miracle of abundance. Nature joins in the canticle of praise (cfr Ps 93) – and all the nations are invited to participate (cfr Ps 96).

b. With this new harvest, the prospects for the immediate future were most encouraging. Joy, praise, thanksgiving were all the natural order of the day. A number of elements contributed to this ceremony: an abundant life was evident in what had just been “in-gathered”: once again the Lord conquered the hostile forces, and His chosen ones had come “home”, to the “land of milk and honey”.<sup>62</sup>

c. It is fairly clear that the ancient Canaanites had an annual harvest festival. Thus, the theory is that the Israelites must have known, and possibly copied, this annual renewal, or enthronement Festival. The celebration was of a religious nature, intimately tied in with fertility rites for the family, flocks and the fields. There are some indications of processions around the places of worship with branches and fruits of the field (cfr Ps 118, a Processional Hymn for the Feast of Tabernacles).

d. One may legitimately wonder whether the text from Isaiah (12;3), of unknown origin, might in some way be connected with this festival: the text speaks of the Lord’s anger subsiding. Consolation has followed, and the Lord is praised as the God of Salvation. The Lord is Israel’s strength, her song. And the promise is that the people will draw an abundance of water from the springs of salvation – and in great joy. As the water supply was always threatened, during this annual Festival, special prayer was offered. Water is the source of life – “milk and honey” seem to be symbols of peace and prosperity. All was in grandiose thanksgiving for past sacred wonders – and hope that the Lord would come anew, to renew the miracle of redemptive creation.<sup>63</sup>

e. In recent times, this kind of meeting has been offered as a possible explanation for the Servant Poems in Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>64</sup> The ceremonial including the living waters was some vivid expression of the keen anticipation of the winter rain. Along with the joyful thanksgiving, an aspect of hope for continued blessings was likewise part of this ceremonial. Psalm 65 is a thanksgiving hymn thanking the Creator for renewing the miracle of the harvest. It seems to thank the Lord for the abundance spring rains – and then the psalm concludes with profound thanksgiving for crowning the year with abundance. The rich harvest is seen as an indication of the passing of the Lord. The whole earth seems to sing in joy.

---

<sup>62</sup> cfr. E. Otto and T. Schram, *Festival and Joy*. Translated by J.L. Blevins. Biblical Encounter Series. Nashville: Abingdon Press 1980. cfr. especially, “The Fall Festival”, pp. 45-77.

<sup>63</sup> cf. Sigismond Moqimkel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*. Translated by D.R.A.-P. Thomas, in two volumes. London: Oxford, Basic Blackwell 1971. Vol 1, pp. 130-136.

<sup>64</sup> John Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah*. London: SPCK 1979.

f. This week of rejoicing was a clear invitation to start over again. “In the beginning” the Lord had created – as this was celebrated in great thanksgiving, following the “historical prologue” of the creation story, there were the stipulations in each Covenant. Israel was being challenged anew to be the People that the Lord has formed for Himself, given them to partake in the land of milk and honey, and now they were to sing His praises.

†††

## 2. THE SOURCE OF THE LIVING WATERS

With the symbol of “water”, a profound insight also into the divinity: His nature, activity, was gradually revealed to ancient Israel. Using the natural traits of this extraordinary and necessary element, divine wisdom has offered a privileged revelation of the very nature of God, and His loving “out-pouring” toward humanity. Various aspects of the divinity comes to the fore – also in the light of NT reading:

### I.) THE CREATOR

a. The awesome power of God is shown particularly in His sovereignty over the unruly abyss: God’s voice roars over the waters, as Israel sang in the Hymn to the Lord of the Storm (cfr Ps 29). In the heavenly palace, everything bespeaks His Glory. The King of all, the Lord communicates some share in His power. This seems almost to be a heavenly enthronement, or cosmic ritual of some kind. The whole heavenly court is part of the chorus of praise – the existence of the “court” is often mentioned in the OT (cfr Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; cfr. Also Ps 89:7; 103:20; 148:1, f.). Israel lived in a milieu that worshipped celestial bodies: and the biblical response to much of this was that the Lord had made the universe, and all that is in it. With utmost ease, He had placed the stars where they are.

b. The storm affords the opportunity to show the awesome power of God. Modern technology has shown some of the awesome storms of the sun, for example, with geysers reaching out into space a half a million kilometers. The Creator is adored as will be seen in the next segment) to show the Lord’s power in history and redemption.<sup>65</sup>

c. An overwhelming divine victory is presented in the Song of Triumph for the King, Psalm 18. With the same awesome power with which the Lord “muttered His threat”, and sends the “blast of His nostrils”, the Lord saves from the deep waters (cfr vv. 15-17).

1) This is a classic ode of victory – an exultant canticle of thanksgiving for God’s help. The terrible storm and the arduous combat join in this one canticle.

2) There may be a hint of primordial battle in the creation story: the spirit of God overcame the forces of primordial chaos (cfr Ps 11:6; 46:3; 50:3; 60:3; 77:17, ff.; 93; 97:2, ff.; 99:1; 144:5, ff.).

---

<sup>65</sup> cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes* . . . , Vol 1, pp. 642, ff.

3) A similar passage is seen in Ex 19:16, ff. The theophany was aptly described by the unleashed powers of nature (cfr Is 24:18, ff.; 29:6; 30:27, ff.; 63:19; 64:3; 68:8, f.; Jgs 5:4, ff.; 1 K 19:11, ff.; Ezk 1:4; Hab 3:6; Na 1:3, ff.).

d. The unruly seas also “personified” evil, or were a symbol of evil. In their awesome power, they would submerge the land that had been “redeemed” from them at creation (cfr Ps 89:10, f.; 104:9). In Psalm 18, on the contrary, the unruly, roaring oceans are threatened in their very being by God’s power (cfr Ps 104:6, ff.; 106:9, f.; Ex 15:8; Na 1:4).<sup>66</sup>

1) The personification of the unruly waters recurs relatively often (cfr Ps 114:3, ff.), and they are presented as raising their unruly power against the creative will of God (cfr ps 74:13). In controlling the waters of the universe, the Lord makes use of powers within the universe, which He himself has made. He simply “collects” the oceans as one would place a liquid in a wine skin (cfr Ps 33:7).

2) The immense seas almost seem to “gang up” on creation, but a word from the mouth of the Most High holds them in check (cfr Si 39:17). These waters that are held back cannot overcome the infinitely powerful “Let it be” of the Creator.

3) Creation is a glorious victory of the Lord over the chaos (cfr Jb 7:12; 26:10, f.; 38:8, 16; Jr 5:22; 10:12, ff.; Ps 65:7, ff.; 89:10, ff.). The Israelites did not praise this power of the Creator in isolation; it always was implicitly at least associated with His power of Redemption.

4) The invitation is for those who believe to rely on His love; that the Lord who made the heavens can indeed rescue us from whatever it is that is bothersome (cfr Ps 33).

## II.) THE SPIRIT

a. The prophet Ezechiel presented the sanctifying power of renewal, as figured under the symbol of water. In the well-known text of the streams of fresh water flowing from under the right side of the Temple, the Prophet noted that wherever the water goes, it brings health. It irrigates the arid land, and the marvelous trees appear, which have a bumper crop twelve months of the year – and even when the fruit has been harvested, the remaining leaves are medicinal (cfr Ezk 37:1-12).

b. As will be seen below, this is almost a return to Eden and the first creation victory. This vision is now projected ahead to the last times (cfr RV 21:1, ff.). The

---

<sup>66</sup> cf. Louis Jacquet, Vol 1, pp. 447, ff.: cfr also Georges Auzou, *Au Commencement Dieu crea le monde, L’histoire et la foi*. Lire La Bible, 36. Paris: du Cerf 1973, pp. 81, ff.

Eden of old becomes an ideal symbol for the future New Jerusalem: giving rise to the question: was Eden simply memory, or is it also a hope?<sup>67</sup>

c. In the times of Ezechiel, the dry climate seems to have made an even greater impression. He presents the coming hour of horror in clear terms: water will be distributed grudgingly, and like bread, it will be scarce ( cfr Ezk 4:16, ff.). The little water will be consumed fearfully, anxiously and restlessly. The whole country will be reduced to a desert (cfr Ezk 12:17, ff.). The rains will be held back (cfr Ezk 22:23, ff.).

d. Yet, Ezechiel will also present hope:

1) In the extended allegory of the abandoned Bedouin baby girl, she will be cleansed with water (cfr Ezk 16:4, 9).

2) The priest-prophet also presents Israel as a “shoot”, planted near plentiful waters, and the vine would produce its branches (cfr Ezk 19:9, ff.).

3) In his extended allegory also of the cedar tree, credit is given to the waters which made it grow. It presents the cedar as the “envy” of the Garden of God, his name for Eden (cfr Ezk 31:1-9).<sup>68</sup>

e. Along with his many dire predictions, Ezechiel also presents consolation for God’s people, also through the symbol of water.

1) He prophesies the New Covenant, using as his symbol, the streams of living water: all the defilement will be washed away, and a new heart will be created.

2) With the image of the clean water, and the coming of the Spirit, Ezechiel predicts the New Creation.

3) The New Temple with its streams of living water flowing through the arid desert ground seems to harken back to the original Eden, with its four rivers flowing out through the whole world.

f. One thought is that Ezechiel could very well have accompanied the Israelites in exile into Babylon. There he would have seen first hand the marvelous system of “the streams of water” (cfr Ps 137) of the Babylonians. His vision is indeed a symbolic one: he predicted that prosperity would return to the Promised Land. The NT will capitalize on this use of water by the Prophets particularly in the baptismal prophecies.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> cf. Frei Carlos Mesters, *Paraíso terrestre: Saudade ou esperance?* Petropolis, RJ, Brasil: Editora Vozes Ltda 1971.

<sup>68</sup> cf. William Riley, *Temple of the Davidic Covenant*. Unpublished Thesina, pp. 116, ff.

<sup>69</sup> cf. J. Steinmann, *Le prophete Ezechiel et les debuts de l'exil*. Paris: du Cerf. Lectio Divina 13, 1953, pp. 228-230, passim.

g. With Ezechiel, literally “a new spirit” takes over, that comes with a message of consolation and hope for the exiles. The people will indeed be purified, restored and renewed.<sup>70</sup>

h. The Creator offers two gifts beyond price: human life and an almost endless capacity for renewal. A “New Creation” comes to be by the lived acceptance of a New Covenant. In humility, also in the spirit of Ezechiel, penitents of all ages have prayed for a “new heart” and a “new spirit”.

### **Summary**

1. Both Isaiah (cfr 65:17, ff.) and Ezechiel (cfr 36:25, ff.) make of the new birth of a sinner a central theme in their message. Because in a spiritual conversion, there is first within a response to divine promptings, there is an expression of this “coming home” also in the release of the captives. “Cosmic Joy” results in the poetic vision of the return home. The inner workings of God indeed do create a new heart, a totally new spirit. The great promise of the prophets of the exile was that the Lord would bring the remnant home. The people will be deeply united within, with a single heart, and a new spirit. They will indeed be espoused to their God, and He will be their God (cfr Ezk 11:17, ff.).

2. The Prophet Joel continues the ideal of the “New Creation” in water and the Holy Spirit. The divine spirit will be “poured out” on all of humanity, and there will be a kind of new era of prophecy, the sign of the presence of the spirit of God (cfr Jl 3:1). The prophet sees the mountains and hills running with wine and milk, and all the rivers will bubble with fresh water.

3. A fountain will spring up to water the vegetation (cfr Jl 4:18). The “pouring out” of the spirit is a full sharing, as one might “pour out” one’s heart and soul (cfr Ps 62:9; Lm 2:19). The Spirit, in these new times, will be bestowed most abundantly, and freely. The “Emmanuel” will be present also as the Spirit of God. The future of Israel will be maintained and sustained by the presence of this new Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

4. For the prophets, the future will depend on Israel’s “remaining with the Lord”. A bucolic prophecy is offered also by Amos (cfr 9:11, ff.) when the harvest will follow almost immediately the planting. The people will be “planted” so deeply, that they will not be “rooted up” again. This “new creation” flows from the streams of living water, with which the Lord will cleanse and re-dedicate His people.




---

<sup>70</sup> cfr. George Montague, *The Holy Spirit – Growth of a Biblical Tradition. A Commentary on the Principal Texts of the OT and the NT*. New York/Paramus/Toronto: Paulist Press 1976, pp. 45, ff.

<sup>71</sup> cf. H.W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*. Translated by Waldemar Jansen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow. Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1977, pp. 60, f., 65, f.

### 3. THE LIVING WATERS RESTORE CREATION

1. The second story of creation (cfr Gn 2:5, ff.) is presented in the background of a beautiful park, a garden, or a desert oasis. In this garden of delight, there is much peace and concord.

a. In the first creation story, the whole universe unfolds in the setting of a kind of extraordinary cosmic liturgy: a canopy, a vault is placed over the Temple of the universe.

b. A light shines out of the darkness, and this seems to give the signal for the gigantic procession of all created blessings. These gradually proceed with each passing day, all beginning like a vigil the night before, toward the Sabbath celebration.

c. The sun and the moon, the greater light and the lesser light are the lamps for the celebration – the stars are almost the same word as the Temple torches. The moon was also thought of as a kind of cosmic calendar, keeping track of the festivals, marking carefully the time to begin.

2. As the Lord Jesus uses the destruction of the Temple and the end of the world, intertwined in His “eschatological discourse”,<sup>72</sup> so the creation story and Solomon’s construction of the Temple are not unlikely “parallel places” (cfr 1 K 6-8). The liturgical “Garden of God” seems to have been a sanctuary. In Eden, God is simply “present” in the Garden, a fitting place for the Most High.

3. This wonderful Covenant of peace was disrupted – the harmony flees the violent thunder and lightning, and the “arrows of the Most High (cfr Ps 18:14; 77:17; 144:6) scattered His enemies. The beautiful garden of Creation where all of nature lived in harmony, is later described prophetically also as the vision of the final times: the wolf lies with the lamb . . . (cfr Is 11:1, ff.). A sign of the new times is the order to put pairs of all existing animals on the Ark of Noah (cfr Gn 6:17, ff.).

a. The beautiful Garden of Peace became a terrible desert, and the Israelites “groaned out” in a kind of “Lamentation Liturgy”. And the Lord heard: in the harsh desert, water was received from stone (cfr Ex 17:1, ff.; Nb 20:1-13; Dt8:15; Ps 105:41). In the sealing of the Covenant with blood on Sinai (cfr Ex 20), Israel is born again.

b. The theme of the “Living Waters” is intimately associated with the deliverance and restoration of God’s people. The hopelessly divided People of God – even more separated in the “diaspora” than they ever were as twelve hostile tribes, are coming home. To assist them on this journey, the Lord will set up His highway in the desert, a stream of flowing water. These “living waters” will irrigate the soil, and cleanse the heart of Israel: once more they will be the Lord’s “very own people”.

---

<sup>72</sup> cfr. Jacques Dupont, OSB, “La ruine du temple et la fin des temps dans le discours de Marc 13”, in: *Apocalypse et théologie de l’Esperance*. Lectio Divina 95. Association catholique française pour l’étude de la bible. Paris: du Cerf 1977, pp. 207-269.



Their renewed hearts will be the fitting sanctuary, the true sanctuary that the Lord has chosen.

4. The terrible curse of the drought will be taken away. The Lord Himself, as a Good Shepherd, will guide His people through the “dark valleys” to the fertile grazing ground.

a. He will send the rain as it is needed, and it will bring new life (cfr Ezk 34:26). The terrible times of the famine will be over; the Good Shepherd has prepared a banquet for His own. The corn will be plentiful; the harvest of the fruit trees and of the fields will be most abundant (cfr Ezk 36:29, ff).

b. The old Deuteronomist had spoken often of the promise of the abundant harvests: each one of these was both a proof that the Lord had kept His word, and an appeal for Israel to keep theirs. The harvest was a “reminder”, another reason “not to forget” anymore.

5. Israel experienced this abiding, providing presence of the Lord when they left the House of Slavery long generations before. Many centuries later, perhaps six or seven, Israel, or a “Small Remnant” will return once again to the Land that had been Promised. They had left in tears, but will come home in joyful praise and thanksgiving.

a. The description of this “home-coming” truly pertains to “Creative Redemption”. The Lord will not abandon His people. There will be rivers in the barren heights, a lake in the wilderness, and streams of fresh water all along the way. There will be water for the thirsty, leafy boughed trees, all along the way. This verdant life will be a sign of the presence of the Most High (cfr Is 41:17, ff.).

b. There will be some kind of transformation of all reality, even though Scripture does not solve the question concerning the precise nature of the final times. Water will play an import role in this New Creation. Hence, water indeed assumes throughout a symbolic sense. The ultimate happiness that is being held before the minds and hearts of the exiles is that of a totally satisfying peace. The water that brings life to the desert is also some kind of a symbol of the power of the Creator.

c. Jerusalem had been wrapped in mourning, her roads and gates were all deserted – no one comes anymore to the Temple to celebrate. However, in the “New Creation of Redemption”, this desert-like appearance will be changed. There will be flourishing verdure and tranquil peace. The “Garden of God” will be restored: the Lord’s mercy has reached down to the ruined Zion, and the desolation will once again be a Garden of Delights. It will be a time of great joy (cfr Is 51:3). The “Garden of God” (cfr Gn 2; 13:10; Ezk 28:13; 31:9; 36:55; Jl 2:3) will be renewed. Her wounds will be healed; there will be great enthusiasm and happiness (cfr Is 22:13; Jr 7:34; 15:16; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11; Is 35:10; 51:3, 11; Ps 51:10; Zc 8:19; Est 8:16, ff.)<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> cf. P. E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaie. Son disciple et leurs Editeurs. Isaie 40-66*. ibid, pp. 248, ff.

6. Water, because of its great importance for life, and its restorative qualities, serves well as a symbol of the vivifying energy of God. So often shrines were built next to flowing streams: Jerusalem itself was near the waters of Gihon (cfr 1 K 1:33). In the New Jerusalem, Ezechiel's vision was that of water flowing from underneath the Temple (cfr Ezk 47). These streams will become rivers, and will surpass by far the rivulets of the former city of Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem, water will be abundant (cfr Ps 46). The vision of the New Jerusalem is the fulfillment of the old descriptions of Eden. The Garden of Delight was history and promise.

All of this imagery will be filled in a most unexpected manner in John's imagery of the pierced side of the Immolated Lamb (cfr Jn 19:34; Rv 22:1, ff.).<sup>74</sup>

7. The "Ballad of the Exiles" (cfr Ps 137) mentions the following streams of Babylon. It is true that the time of the Captivity was one of deep regret – but, at the same time, there was a hidden hope of one day coming home. Second Isaiah nurtured this hope.

a. It seems that Babylon contained engineers of great ability who had learned to "master" water by the construction of canals. The Israelites, in their tragic captivity, mourned their past. This sorrowful memory of their once beloved Jerusalem is noted (either prophetically or historically) in Solomon's great prayer of dedication. He asked the Lord to hear their prayers of repentance "in the land of exile", if they should "turn towards the Lord" (cfr 1 K 8:47, ff.).

b. These sorrowful memories had, in the plan of God, as a scope, that of bringing about a conversion of heart.<sup>75</sup>



## B. JOHANNINE CONNECTION

This may best be noted by tracing the various miracles, or discourses concerning **water** as found in writings attributed to John. The following episodes come to mind:

- Cana (Jn 2)
- the Woman of Samaria (Jn 4)
- the Discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6)
- the Discourse for Tabernacles (Jn 7)

---

<sup>74</sup> cfr. the note for Ezk 47:1, in: *Traduction oecumenique de la bible* (TOB), Edition integrale. Paris: du Cerf/Les Berges et Les Mages 1975.

<sup>75</sup> cfr. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes* . . . , Vol 3, pp. 579-594.

## Introduction

The question of the “Thirst of Christ” can only be understood in its rich preparatory, accompanying and subsequent contexts.

In a recent study,<sup>76</sup> it was noted that the rather “mystical” interpretation of this salvific mystery in the life of Christ has been for the most part abandoned by modern critical interpretation. Yet, paradoxically, an unexpected richness of this mystery of the earthly sojourn of Jesus has been uncovered.

The ancients stressed very much the physical thirst of Christ, and perhaps a “spiritual” thirst – that for the souls of humanity. In this view, it was reasoned that the divine plan of redemption was to fulfill the ancient prophecies: in His thirst, they gave Him poison (cfr Ps 69:21), and He would be made to drink wormwood (cfr Lm 3:15). The Lord’s thirst indeed fulfilled the Scriptures.

(1) The thirst, coming near the end, was one more atrocious suffering of Jesus. The great loss of liquids would have drained His substance. Jesus conceivably would have suffered “dehydration”.

(2) The thirst, in this view, is also for the loss of souls – His thirst was for their salvation. There was also seen a kind of solidarity with the human race. The thirst of Jesus is for the height of all such suffering of human beings through the ages. In this scene, the thirst of Jesus is meant to teach the longing, a kind of nostalgia, for what comes later. This is the thirst for true wisdom.<sup>77</sup> Traditionally, then, there was great emphasis given to two interpretations of “thirst”, present in the agony of Jesus:

- the **physical** thirst, evidently caused by the horrible ordeal to which He was subject. This would also serve to show the reality of His human nature and body. The reality of this agony would reject all Docetism.

- a **spiritual** thirst: this may have begun with St. Augustine and was continued in the writings of monastic circles. The corporal thirst of Jesus revealed the even deeper thirst for the redemption of the world – the yearning to apply the infinite divine mercy.

Interpreters of John, though, appeal to his “symbolism”. In addition to the “physical” thirst and the spiritual, or “mystical thirst”, great value is placed in seeking to penetrate Johannine symbolism, the theology of the author of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> cfr. Ignace de La Potterie, SJ, “La sete di Gesù moriente e l’interpretazione giovannea della sua morte in croce”, in: *La sapienza della croce oggi. Atti del Congresso internazionale. Roma: 13/18 ottobre 1975. I. La sapienza della croce nella rivelazione e nell’ecumenismo*. Leumann (Torino), LDC 1976, pp. 33-49.

<sup>77</sup> St. Robert Bellarmine.

<sup>78</sup> cfr. Raymond Brown, “Crucial Questions in Johannine Theology – Ecclesiology – Sacramentology – Eschatology – Wisdom Motifs”, in: *The Gospel of John, I-XII*. Anchor Bible, Vol 29, Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1966, Introduction, pp. cv-cxxvii.

- hence, thirst may also be seen to have a “**symbolic**” sense. This expresses in human terms

(a) The yearning for the glory of the Father

(b) This will involve returning to the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. A careful reflection on the contexts: immediate and more remote – in that which precedes, accompanies and follows the basic text of John, may offer a profound insight into the symbol of mercy.

## 1. **CANA OF GALILEE (Jn 2:1-12)**

One of the difficulties with this story is the fact that it has such an abundance of symbolism. In this one passage, there is profound reflection for theology. This is the first of the signs that have as their purpose the revelation of the divine personality of Jesus. The faith of the followers of Jesus will be eventually brought to perfection.

Some would tie this Cana account in with the new creation, but this idea may not be central. The emphasis seems more on eschatological replacement and fulfillment.

Woman. Mary’s role here and the title Jesus gives her also tie her in with Jesus’ manner of addressing her on Calvary. She is presented as the model, believing, abandoned, handmaid of the Lord – as He was of the Father (cfr Jn 19:25). There is surely a symbolic importance in the exchange between Mary and Jesus.

a. With the title “Woman” the reader is brought back first of all to Genesis 3 and the “proto-evangelium”, the promise of the “woman” whose seed will crush the head of the serpent (cfr Gn 3:15).

b. However, at the same time, one must reflect on the Woman of the Apocalypse. She in profound symbolism is a central personality in the mystery of Redemption. The Woman of the Apocalypse is to give birth to the Messiah (cfr Rv 12:5; Ps 2:9). The “dragon” is so often associated with the serpent of Genesis. Many would read the Woman of Rv 12 in a collective sense, but so often these figures are based on real human beings. In Genesis the “woman” has been Eve, which serves as a springboard for the book of the Apocalypse.

c. There are other possible connections: in Jesus’ Farewell Discourse, He is addressing His own, deeply saddened by the prospect of His departure (cfr Jn 16:20, ff.). He compares this to the suffering of a woman in childbirth – but when the new life has come into the world, there is universal rejoicing (Rm 8: “Cosmic Hope”). Jesus’ comparison is that this is the situation of the disciples now at the prospect of His leaving them. The true disciple will pass from grief to joy – and the basis of this joy is the new life that has come into the world.

d. The sufferings of childbirth are often used as a symbol, or figure for the coming of the new times (cfr Ho 13:13, f.; Is 21:3; 26:17; 37:3; 66:7-9; Mi 4:9, f.; 5:2).

Prophets applied this image to Israel's terrible misfortunes, the sufferings of the Messiah and the evils that would precede His coming. Isaiah, in particular, speaks of the "Woman", perhaps meaning Sion. However, there is also a parallel with the first "woman" after the fall, the promise that was made that from her seed would come one who would crush the head of the serpent. This "woman" is eventually crowned with the stars (cfr Rv 12).

John has used the same word to describe the sufferings of childbirth (cfr Jn 16:21), contrasting the lot of the first woman after the fall and the moral sufferings of the disciples.

The "woman" in John's treatment has both messianic and eschatological implications. There is the promise of the ultimate victory, and the joy without end. It is through Mary that these prophecies would be realized. She has brought to completion the incomplete role of Eve.

A further connection with these early verses might be that at the birth of Eve's child, she said: I have acquired a man with the help of God (cfr Gn 4:1). It is not too far-fetched to think that the statement of Pilate: This is the Man (cfr Jn 19:5) is the ultimate fulfillment of these beginnings. So, it can be concluded that "the difficult birth" presented in John (cfr 16:21, f) concerns also a reference to the past, as well as a prophecy of the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. His departure from this world will bring joy that will know no end (cfr Jn 14:18, f, 28; 16:22).

There are some points in the Cana story that are clear:

- Jesus does respond to the request of Mary, and performs His first "sign";
- despite Jesus' apparent harshness, Mary nevertheless knew that Jesus would hear her. She gives the order to the disciples to do whatever He tells them – expressing in this way, her own response to God: its OT counterparts may be the story of Joseph – and do whatever you are told – and also Moses, who did all he was told (cfr Gn 41:55; Ex 35:1, 4, 10, 29; 36:1, 5, 7, 21, 22, 29, 31:3, 42, 43; 40:16, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32).
- the miracle has enormous importance – it offers the basis of a more profound acceptance of Jesus. Mary so often is presented in union with the disciples;
- there is an intimate tie between this passage, and Mary's rediscovery of Jesus, in John (cfr 19:25, ff.).

There may be something of a tie here between John and the story recorded in Luke, of Jesus' first wounds in that Gospel. When Jesus is "found" by His parents, He asks Mary why they had been looking for Him (cfr Lk 2:49) – and here, at Cana, Jesus asks her why she has "turned to" Him (cfr Jn 2:3, f).

The whole story of Cana takes place at a nuptial banquet – a later symbol for the eternal sharing with the Trinity, and the promise of the Apocalypse (cfr Rv 19:7, ff.; 21:2, 9). The "banquet" also appears in Jesus' parables with some frequency (cfr

Mt 22:1, ff.; 25:1, ff.; Lk 12:37; 22:15, ff.). The efficacious intercession of Mary at Cana has been seen as a prelude of her eternal intercession in heaven.

Water. The eucharistic symbolism of Cana is not always emphasized – some have also read Cana as an indication that holy matrimony is indeed a Sacrament. The primary meaning of all this – even more immediate than the eternal nuptial symbolism – would be the “new wine”, the gift of salvation brought by Jesus. When the water had been changed, there is some emphasis on the fact that the headwaiter did not know from whence it came – “not knowing” is a frequent theme in John (cfr Jn 7:27, f.; 8:14; 9:29, f.; 19:9) – the wound in the side, Thomas will come to faith. This precious gift of the wine is often the symbol of the eschatological times Amos spoke of a return to Eden, when the mountains and hills would flow with new wine (cfr Am 9:13). Hoseah saw the abundance of grain, wine and oil as the answer the Lord will give to those who will respond to Him (cfr Ho 2:24). There will be wine and milk in the hills, promised Joel (cfr Jl 4:18). The “new wine” has been seen as both sapiential and eucharistic – themes that will return in John 6.

The many symbols afforded here: the water, bread, wine, as offered by John are read by many interpreters as the comprehensive gift of divine life, through the Holy spirit, as promised so regularly in John (cfr 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40). Eschatological salvation is so often uppermost in John’s mind.

The possible parallels with the crucifixion and resurrection scenes here would be: the Woman, the “Hour”, the water, wine and the nuptial theme of the New Covenant.<sup>79</sup>



## 2. THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA (cfr Jn 4:1, ff.)

The main interest in this rather long discourse (42 verses) is once more the gradual revelation of the personality of Jesus. In this passage, He goes from being a “man”, as the Woman of Samaria says that He is – then she wonders if He might be the “Messiah” and finally, the people of Samaria, because they had heard Him themselves, believed that indeed Jesus is “the Savior of the World”.

The symbol that is of most interest here is the encounter at the well. Again, there are several parallels that might be projected both forward and backward to the OT (e.g. the Christmas story).

- the discourse concerning the water;
- the missionary discourse (vv 31, ff).




---

<sup>79</sup> cf. R. Brown, *ibid.*, pp. 97-111; cfr. also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*. Herder’s Theological Commentary on the NT. New York: Herder and Herder 1968, Vol 1, pp. 323-340; F. M. Braun, OP, *Jean le theologien. Sa theologie, ee Christ, notre Seigneur*. Vol 3, 2. Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 95-108.

**1. Concerning the Water:** Jesus came to Jacob's well, tired from the journey, and He sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour (cfr Jn 4:5, ff.). This whole matter seems both to be an anticipation and a prefiguration of what is to take place on the Cross. The time of day, the exhaustion of Jesus will occur again, on Calvary. Furthermore, the fact of thirst is found three separate times (cfr vv 3-15). It does not seem that the woman has experienced the "thirst" of which Jesus speaks. She remains on a physical, material level – whereas, Jesus is telling her of something far more sublime.

Once again, the woman "did not know" the source of the waters of which He spoke – nor did she know the Person Who was addressing her. Jesus' thirst is to make known what it is that God is offering. Once more there is a reality of real thirst, which serves as the springboard for a much deeper understanding of the word. Anyone who would drink of the water that Jesus would offer, will never thirst again (v. 14).

As has been seen, the symbolism that water provides is quite broad: it is associated with creation, redemption, purifying, slaking thirst, restoring life, ensuring fecundity – and in brief, might simply mean the blessings of God. Just referring quickly to the OT, it has broad application:

- God Himself (cfr Jr 2:13; 17:13) – cisterns
- the river of delights (cfr Ps 36:8)
- wisdom, the Torah
- the spirit of God

In the passage under consideration, "water" may summarize the entire OT tradition.

As on Calvary, the thirst of Jesus is radically misunderstood; in fulfillment of the ancient Psalm, He is given vinegar in the place of water (cfr Ps 69:21). The "misunderstanding" theme will invite every believer of good will to ponder more deeply. By the symbol of the water and His thirst, Jesus' suffering adds considerably to the "content" of divine revelation. Within Jesus, there is the intense yearning to give the "living waters" to the woman of Samaria – later on, this yearning will be to send the Holy Spirit (cfr Jn 19:30). This parallelism is established, but at least it would make one ponder. In John 4, Jesus' thirst is somewhat slaked when He communicates Himself to the Woman as the Source. In like manner, His thirst on Calvary ends when He "ex-pires", sends out the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore, in the encounter with the woman of Samaria, there is the promise, and the bestowal of the gift of God. The comparison is that of a source of living water, that flows into eternal life. Each one who receives these waters, becomes like a garden and will be gifted with a spring whose waters never run dry (cfr Is 58:11). Furthermore, going back to Sirach, there might also be in this idea a basis for the "Missionary Discourse" which follows below: each one receiving these living waters must be, like the Woman of Samaria, a missionary: she puts down the jar, and ran

---

<sup>80</sup> cf. R. Schnackenburg, *ibid.*, pp. 419-442, *passim* ; cf. R. Brown, pp 178-181.

back to town (cfr v. 28). In Sirach's imagery compares wisdom to a conduit from a river, running into a garden, into the orchard. Teaching will pour forth like a broad sea (cfr Si 24:30, ff.).

The idea is that the word of Jesus is not just a kind of "bind" for the sheaves, to hold one's conduct in according to laws. And John is not merely talking about material prosperity of messianic times, or the wisdom of the doctors, metaphorically present in the fresh waters of the well.

At least in some distant manner, there is a hint here of the inexhaustible Spirit: while not specifically mentioned in the story of the Woman of Samaria, this is the imagery that is in the offering in Jn 7. Jesus offers the gift of the Father which is the Holy Spirit, to believers.

In John's own symbolism, the flowing water also implies a certain contentment, the achievement of the deepest yearning of the wayfarer. Jesus also clearly associates baptism in water, and in the Spirit. John the Baptist had baptized in water, and Jesus fulfills that through the sending of the Holy Spirit. In this colloquy with the Woman of Samaria, there is an orientation toward that Baptism in the Spirit. This leads to mission, as is evident in Jesus' conversation with His own disciples – in this He speaks of a mysterious food, that of doing the Father's will (cfr v. 34).<sup>81</sup>

**2. The Missionary Discourse:** in the latter part of this chapter 4 of John, there is the so-called "Scene Two", or the "Missionary Discourse".

Jesus suggests that they look around, and they will see that the fields are all ready for the harvest. Jesus offers a harvest that they had not worked for – and explains that it is the grain of eternal life (cfr Jn 4:35, ff.).

This text, and particularly its context with the Woman of Samaria, has led many interpreters to see that the meeting at Jacob's Well is to be reading the light of the "New Covenant". In an earlier text, concerning purification (cfr Jn 3:27, ff.), there was a dispute with a Jew about purification. The disciples of John then went to him, and in his reply, he identifies Jesus with the Spouse, he dearly loved. It is the well-known passage that the spouse is for the bridegroom only. The bridegroom's friend is glad in hearing His voice – perhaps a text from the Song of Songs (cfr 8:2). So, the friend of the groom must decrease, while He increases, as God has given to Him the Spirit.

This passage makes it possible to apply to the coming of Jesus to the entire tradition of the Espousals as the Covenant with God. Repeatedly in the old law this figure was alive. The Deuteronomist strove to have the covenant established "this day", and spoke of the nuptial jealousy of God (cfr Dt 5:2, ff.). Second Isaiah repeatedly referred to the nuptial theme, in that from now on, the Creator will be the

---

<sup>81</sup> cf. F. M. Braun, *ibid.*, pp. 63, ff.; cfr. *id.*, *Jean le theologien. Sa theologie, Le mystere de Jesus-Christ*. Paris: Gabalda 1966, Vol 3, 1, pp. 90, ff.



Spouse, the Redeemer. The Lord calls back, will re-build, His forsaken wife (cfr Is 54:5, ff.). Jeremiah recalls the early affection of Israel, the love of the bridal days, when the people followed the Lord through the wilderness (cfr Jr 11:15). Ezechiel's extended nuptial metaphor, or allegory on Israel's history, is the story of a monarch who finds an abandoned infant, still in the blood of her birth – picked up and saved by God (cfr Ezk 16). And Hoseah, from his own experience, is inspired to write about a new Covenant in nuptial terms. The promise is that God will betroth Himself to His people in great love and tenderness. (cfr Ho 2:21, ff.).

In the gift of the wine at the marriage festival of Cana (cfr Jn 2), there are initiated the new times. The meeting now with the woman of Samaria at the well, can only call to mind other meetings at other times. The closer one studies the conversation of Jesus with the Woman, the more possible does it seem to bear some connection with Genesis:

- Rebecca, and her marriage with Isaac (cfr Gn 24:12, ff.).
- Rachel, and her marriage with Jacob (cfr Gn 29:1, ff.).

There are striking parallels in these stories, with the account of John concerning the Woman of Samaria:

**a. The Well:** perhaps this has been immortalized in the Song of Songs – this is the spring that brings life, this source of living water, flowing down from Lebanon (cfr Sgs 4:15). As would Tobit later, the confidant of Abraham is sent with Isaac into a far country to find a worthy spouse. The parallels are as follows:

- the servant of Abraham set out . . . and at the time when the women go down to the well to draw water . . . (cfr Gn 24:10).
- and Jesus was on His way to a Samaritan town, and Jacob's well is there (cfr Jn 4:5).

**b. The time of day:** in the Genesis account, "it was the evening, at the time when the women go to draw water. The servant is at the well, and he is looking for a girl to come to draw water, and he will ask for a drink (cfr Gn 24:11, 20, f., 43).

In John's account, it was about the sixth hour, and the Woman of Samaria came to draw water – and Jesus asks her for a drink.

**c. The offering of gifts:** after the camels had drunk, the man gave the girl some gold bracelets (cfr Gn 24:22). In John's account, Jesus tells the Woman, if only she knew what it was that was being offered to her (cfr Jn 4:10).

**d. The spreading of the Good News:** the girl at the well ran home to tell all that happened (cfr Gn 24:28). In a similar manner the Woman of Samaria put down the jar, and ran home – she spoke of a "man", and wondered if indeed He were the "Christ" (cfr Jn 4:28, ff.).

**e. The response of the "Hearers of the Word":** Laban runs from his home to meet the man at the well (cfr Gn 24:29, ff.). In like manner, the people of Samaria

started on their way toward Jesus. Many came to profess their faith in Jesus on the strength of what the woman had said (cfr Jn 4:30, 39).

f. The conviction ultimately is from God: Laban's response is that the servant is indeed "blessed of Yahweh" (cfr Gn 24:31). And the people of Samaria professed their "theological" faith – no longer on the strength of the woman's testimony, but on His: He really is the savior of the world (cfr Jn 4:42).<sup>82</sup>

There are interpreters who see a clear connection between Jn 4 and Acts 8: the origins of the Apostolic Mission as turning beyond the confines of the Jewish people.<sup>83</sup>

Along with the parallels, there are also clear differences between the great women of the times of the patriarchs, and the Woman of Samaria:

Rebecca clearly belongs to the legitimate descendency from Abraham (cfr Gn 24:4, 24, 37, f.) – whereas, the Woman of Samaria pertains to a "despised" population, in the Jewish mind (cfr Jn 4:9).

This anti-Samaritan feeling is forcefully brought forward by Sirach: there are two nations that are detested, and the third is LO-AMMI, not my people: the inhabitants of Seir, the Philistines, and the "stupid people" of Shechem (cfr Si 50:25, ff.).

Furthermore, Rebecca is a virgin, or irreproachable conduct (cfr Gn 24:16, 43) – whereas the Woman of Samaria has had five husbands. Some interpreters believe it is probable that John also has in mind here the divinities of the five tribes transplanted into Samaria by the Assyrians (cfr 2 K 17:24, ff.).

In the conversations, then, with the Woman of Samaria, this OT background might be considered. It is to these unfaithful people that the promise of an integral and just betrothal is promised. They will be espoused to the Lord with fidelity, and in this, they will come to "know" Him (cfr Ho 2:21, ff.).

The unfaithful Woman of Samaria, despite her disorder, will eventually come to "know" Jesus, the awaited Messiah. There is in this a kind of reconciliation for one who had been dissident. Long before, in Ezechiel's prophecy, there is a promise of all this: when the Lord decried the infidelity of the Israelites, the prophet stated: "your elder sister is Samaria", who lives with her daughters. The Lord promised to restore "Samaria and her daughters" (cfr Ezk 16:45-62). The Lord has promised to renew the Covenant with the united people of God.

---

<sup>82</sup> cf. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 1, pp. 93-95, passim.

<sup>83</sup> cfr. R. P. Martin, *NT Foundations. A Guide for Christian Students.* Vol 2. *Acts-Revelations.* Exeter: Paternoster Press 1978, pp. 83-91. "Stephen, the Hellenists and the Early Gentile Mission."

The adding on of the Samaritans to the Christian community was of great importance, as is read in the Acts of the Apostles: the day that the bitter persecution of the Church broke out in Jerusalem. While the apostles remained there, others fled, and went from place to place preaching the word of God. Among these places that were evangelized, were also “a number of Samaritan villages” (cfr Ac 8:4-25). (cfr the “Good Samaritan” parable).

The final conclusion of John’s story about the Woman of Samaria is that the Covenant was indeed extended far beyond the home tribe of Judah. In the Samaritans’ profession of faith, the true dimensions of Jesus’ coming is expressed: in simple terms, He is the Savior of the world (cfr Jn 4:42).

### **3. THE BREAD OF LIFE (cfr Jn 6:35)**

The Church Fathers have noted the great contrast between John 6 and Genesis 3:

- in Gn (3:6), do not eat the fruit of the tree or you will die – and John reverses that: if one eats the bread that comes down from heaven, he/she will never die (cfr Jn 6:50).
- Adam, in partaking of the fruit of the tree, brings death into the world – and Jesus promises eternal life (cfr Jn 6:51).
- Adam is driven out of the Garden (cfr Gn 3:24) – and Jesus promises always to welcome those who come to Him (cfr Jn 6:37).

Therefore, many themes interweave in this chapter 6 of John. Jesus’ ability to walk on the water here (cfr Jn 6:16-21) may be an effort to call to mind the fact that Jesus, as Son of God, shares in the Father’s sovereignty over the water – both in the Exodus (cfr Ps 77:19; 78:24), and a New Creation theme.

This chapter 6 seems to be an incident from another Passover, so His discourse is on the bread of life. As hunger and thirst were often joined in the Exodus themes, John might be joining them here. In Deutero-Isaiah there was the promise that God’s people would not hunger or thirst again, and the One Who pities them, would lead them to the streams of fresh water (cfr Is 49:10).

In this passage, there is a parallel between the one who “comes” to Jesus, and the ones who “believes” in Him. And the parallel in the verse of interest to the symbolism of water is: that Jesus is indeed the Bread of Life – whoever comes to Him, will never be hungry – and whoever believes in Him, will never thirst (cfr Jn 6:35). As in the other passages from John concerning water and thirst, here, too, they may be considered on different levels.

Without entering into minute details, this whole discourse can be understood either eucharistically or sapientially (i.e., the “bread” is Jesus’ doctrine), or both. Both find good support in the text.

a. Sapiential Interpretation: Jesus presents Himself with the end in mind of being accepted – that His hearers “come” to Him, believe in Him (cfr Jn 6:35-37, 40, 44, f., 47). A very close parallel with the “bread of life”, would be the “living waters”, also a symbol for divine revelation, knowledge about God. The Wisdom tradition often couples these ideas: wisdom will nourish one with the bread of understanding, and impart the water of learning (cfr Si 15:3).

In the promise of messianic times, Deutero-Isaiah’s concluding chapter opens with the urgent invitation to come to the water, all who are thirsty. There is the invitation to corn, wine and milk (cfr Is 55:1, ff.) – and the banquet theme is once again in the fore (cfr Is 25:6, ff.). Deutero-Isaiah speaks of the rain and snow as watering the earth, and giving it an abundant yield – and explicitly compares this to the word of God which does not return to the Lord empty (cfr Is 55:10, ff.).

b. Eucharistic Interpretation: the context of Jn 6 is Passover, and opens with the multiplication of bread (cfr Jn 6:1-16) – a miracle not totally divorced from the changing of the water into wine at Cana. Jesus identifies Himself with the OT manna – He is the Bread of Life.<sup>84</sup>

John 6 would identify the “two-fold table of the Lord” – that of His Word, and the Bread of Heaven. This is found also in the story of Emmaus. Jesus has already stated that His food is to do the will of His Father (cfr Jn 4:34). In other words, His whole existence is centered on the One who has sent Him. There is great affinity here with Hebrews (cfr 10:5, ff.) – He has been consecrated and sent into this world to do the will of the Father (cfr Jn 10:36) and for this He will also consecrate Himself (cfr Jn 17:19). The “heart” of the mystery of redemption is Jesus’ loving obedience to the Father.<sup>85</sup>

“Living water”, then, is just one of Jesus’ symbols to describe His gifts. The bread from heaven also helps to understand the implications of “living water” in the context of John 6. To know Jesus, is to know His gift – in Him, there can be no authentic acceptance of His gifts, without at the same time “coming” to Him. There is no confusion in Jesus’ teaching between the God of the blessings, and the blessings of God. The gift of redemption that Jesus brings asks for a return for His Word, His Eucharist. Every reception of Him, asks for a true “believing” in Him, a more profound “coming” to Him.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> cfr. R. Brown, *ibid*, pp. 272-280.

<sup>85</sup> cfr. R. Schnackenburg, *Vol I*, pp. 446, f.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*, pp. 427, f.

#### **4. THE DISCOURSE FOR THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES (cfr Jn 7:37-39)**

##### **Introduction:**

Once again, the parallel may be instituted: to “thirst” for Jesus is answered by “coming to Him” – to “drink” means to “believe” in Him. “To drink” is to “come to Jesus” – “to be thirsty” means to “have faith”.

Specifically here, Jesus identifies “the fountains of the living water” with the Spirit (cfr v 39). There is a distinction between the “time of Jesus”, with all the verbs in the present case. But when He speaks of the Spirit, the tense changes toward the future. The faith that depends on “signs” must give way to that faith based on the coming of the Spirit.

It is not exaggerated, then, to see in John a gradual build-up, with these various passages concerning water: from Cana, Samaria, Bread of Life – right through the opening of the Side of Christ on Calvary. The Festival of Tabernacles is the renewal of Covenant and the coming of the Spirit. The streams of living water that flow from His side on Calvary will mean the coming of the Spirit, Who comes as Jesus “ex-pires”.

On this Feast of Tabernacles, once again Jesus initiates a discourse on the thirst for living waters. On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus expresses His deepest sentiments concerning thirst – not as explicit as He did in His discourse with the Woman of Samaria, not as He would on Calvary (cfr Jn 19:28). Yet, even here, Jesus expresses His “thirst” – He yearns that His invitation be accepted, and that His listeners would “come to Him”, “believe” in Him and in the Father’s plan of mercy.

Much like the situation at Jacob’s well, Jesus indeed yearned to communicate the “Living Water”. On this Festival of Tabernacles Jesus more explicitly introduces the coming era of the Holy Spirit. He promises an Advocate, Who likewise will not say is “own word”, but will remind the Church of all that Jesus has said (cfr Jn 14:25, ff.). There will be a gradual coming to the complete truth – yet, the Spirit will only say what He in His turn has “learned”. His will be a “prophetic reminder”, a mixture of the teachings of Jesus as these will be realized in future times. Everything that the Spirit will say will be taken from the store of Jesus’ teachings (cfr Jn 16:13), ff.).

Here, then, on this Festival of Tabernacles, Jesus goes beyond the theme of thirst, and that of the Living Water. Here He specifically introduces the discourse about the Holy Spirit, thereby explaining an important element in the symbolism. All the way along, then, John presents the themes of “thirst” and “water” on several levels. This will lead the close observer to the conclusion that the thirst on Calvary is not merely physical, which would be expected because of Jesus’ physical ordeal. Likewise, the streams of “living water” that flow from the side of the deceased Christ will have profound biblical connections. On Calvary, Jesus will be identified with the “thirsty” of all times: the thirst of Israel in the desert, the quest and searching of those

sincerely seeking the truth and goodness. In His thirst, Jesus wants to respond to the deepest yearnings of the human heart, by sending the Holy Spirit of God. His people will gradually be led to the fullness of truth.<sup>87</sup>

In an effort to summarize the sublime doctrinal content of this brief passage concerning the “living waters” on the feast of Tabernacles (cfr Jn 7:37-39), the following four points may be considered:<sup>88</sup>

1. **As Scripture says:** there is no precise text that the Evangelist has in mind here – rather than considering a specific text, it seems that “the Scriptures” have prepared for this moment. So much in the life of Jesus is “so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled”.<sup>89</sup> Rather than indicating any lack of Jesus’ knowledge of the Scriptures, this statement of His would seem to indicate a profound knowledge of central biblical themes. What is present here, can very well be an OT insight, that will shed much light on the reading of the Wounded Side of Jn 19.

a. The Second Exodus Miracle: There is implicit here a kind of “second story” of redemption – after diving the Red Sea so that Israel could pass, the Lord split the rock, and water gushed forth (cfr Ex 17:1, ff.; Nb 2:11; Is 48:15).

This miracle was sung also in Israel’s great Historical Psalms – one of them, “The Lessons of Israelite History” (cfr ps 78), presents this in dynamic fashion: splitting the rocks, quenching their thirst with limitless water, bringing streams out of rock, and water in torrents (cfr vv 15, f.).

Psalms 105, “The Wonderful History of Israel”, brings the manna of the desert, and the water from the rock together. After the Lord satisfied His people with the quails and the bread, He opened the rock, and water poured forth like a river (cfr vv 40, f.).

b. The Water of the New Covenant: it is through the cleansing streams of fresh water that Ezechiel envisioned the establishment of a new and deeper relationship of life between God and His People (cfr Ezk 37:25, ff.). After the vision of the “dry bones”, and the restoration of Israel to new life, the prophet speaks of the creation of a “new heart”, and the communication of a new spirit. Ezechiel brings together the fountains of living water, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord God, through His word and His spirit, will bring about a new heavens and a new earth, a totally New Creation.

c. The New Eden: That results from the water from the right side of the Temple (cfr Ezk 47:1-12). The stream flows eastwards, and becomes a river – and

---

<sup>87</sup> cfr. Ignace de la Potterie, pp. 39-42.

<sup>88</sup> For what follows, cfr. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 2, pp. 50-56, passim.

<sup>89</sup> cf. C.H. Dodd, “The NT as the Fulfillment of the OT”, in: **The Authority of the Bible**. Glasgow: Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1978, pp. 194-211; C.F.D. Moule, “The Fulfillment Theme in the NT”, in: **The Origin of Christology**. Cambridge/London/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press 1978, pp. 127-134.

everywhere this stream goes, it restores health. There is an explosion of new life. The fruit trees bear fruit every single month – and when their fruit is consumed, the remaining leaves have curative powers.

Here, water symbolizes the sanctifying renewal of the Spirit, in prophecy. This “Return to Eden” will be picked up by the last book of Scripture (cfr Rv 22:1, ff.). When Ezechiel was trying to warn the people about the impending punishment of God, he did so in terms of water. He repeatedly predicted the times that the Israelites would indeed “measure” their water consumption – it will be so scarce that they will drink it “grudgingly” (cfr Ezk 4:16, ff.) – in great anxiety, even fear, will they drink the little that may be allotted to them (cfr Ezk 12:17, ff.). The indication of divine “wrath” will be that the land will receive no rain, no showers (cfr Ezk 17:5, ff.).

Ezechiel describes the “good times” showing the choice of God of the abandoned Bedouin baby girl – taking her home, washing her of her defilement (cfr Ezk 16:4, 9). Another image is that Israel was a vine shoot, planted near the abundant streams (cfr Ezk 19:9, ff.). In the allegory of the cedar, the prophet presents this tree as “the envy of every tree in Eden”. The waters made it grow tall and straight, and the rivers poured round where it was planted (cfr Ezk 31:1, ff.).

All of this was lost, but in the image of the New Temple, one is brought back to the original abundance. There is a hint of the original Eden, with its four rivers inundating and freshening the whole world. It is this water that gives possibility to the trees heavy with fruit, and the teeming life of the universe. The entire vision is a symbolic one: prosperity has returned in the Promised Land with redemption. The NT will make extensive use of the New Creation theme, and the clean water of the New Covenant – especially in the baptismal symbolism. In this, the fusion of the fresh water and the Spirit of God is most pronounced.<sup>90</sup>

Ezechiel, then, produces the New Spirit to inspire hope into the discouraged hearts of the exiles. The people will be purified and restored and renewed – the Spirit as a new “breath” and the fresh water bringing new life.<sup>91</sup>

d. The New People: the prophets Isaiah (cfr 65:17, ff.) and Ezechiel (cfr 36:25, ff.) make of the re-birth of the sinful Israel a central theme in their preaching. There is an overlapping of very evident “cosmic joy” that results when the wayward people returns to its God. They will have a “single heart”, and a “new spirit”, they will be God’s “beloved” (cfr Ezk 11:17, ff.).

An unknown psalmist sees this all as a result of the breath of God, from which new life begins, renewing the world (cfr Ps 104:30). In the “First Creation”, the

---

<sup>90</sup> cfr. J. Steinmann, *Le prophete Ezechiel et les debuts de l'exil*. Paris: du Cerf, Lectio Divina 13. 1953, pp. 228-230.

<sup>91</sup> cfr. G. Montague, *The Holy Spirit – Growth of a Biblical Tradition – A Commentary on the Principal Texts of the OT and the NT*. New York/Paramus/Toronto: Paulist Press 1976, pp. 45, ff.

creator breathed life into the speck of dust. And now, in the “New Creation”, fresh life will be communicated by God.<sup>92</sup>

e. The eschatological source of cleansing water (cfr Zc 13:1; 14:8) – this water will flow summer and winter, to the eastern sea and to the western sea. Perhaps this use of paired extremes would be a poetic manner of expressing totality (binomes de totalite).



These, then, are some of the images and symbols that would come to mind from Jesus’ expression: “as Scripture says”. It does not seem that Jesus was quoting one, or more texts – but that there is brought here a most skillful interweaving of complementary symbols:

- (1) - Genesis and the New Creation;
- (2) - Exodus, the dividing of the sea, and the obtaining water from the rock;
- (3) - The prophets, particularly Isaiah, Ezechiel and Zechariah, and their themes of “living water”, the spirit and the New Covenant.

All of these elements will come to bear in the crucifixion scene and in the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Perhaps even more simply and comprehensively, the setting of the Discourse on the Living Water offers a profound biblical insight. The Feast of Tabernacles has deep OT roots. Jewish scholarship<sup>93</sup> indicates some of the possible readings for the old festival of the autumn harvest – that might also have been the time of the Covenant Renewal (cfr S. Mowinckel). This festival, in which water was of such importance surely would have leaned on the Book of Consolation: water will be poured out on thirsty soil, as the spirit of God on Israel’s descendants. They will spring up like poplars near the running streams of fresh water (cfr Is 43:3, ff.). Jeremiah would remind the worshippers each year that the Lord was Himself the fountain of living water, and that He was not to be abandoned (cfr Jr 1:13). The “old stand-by”, Deuteronomy, re-presented the desert experience to generations of Israelites, reminding them not to forget the Lord Who had brought their ancestors through a vast and terrible place, and obtained water for them from the hardest rock (cfr Dt 8:11, ff.).

The Feast of the Tabernacles, like every “memorial” went in two directions:  
***He was speaking of the spirit . . . ; whoever is thirsty. . . ; As scripture says . . . From His Breast . . . :***

- historical: the festival was renewed each year, and the Israelites were reminded to live out in shelters as their ancestors had done generations before. In this way, all through the years, the Israelites were brought to “know” that the Lord had brought them out of the land of slavery (cfr Lv 23:39, ff.);

<sup>92</sup> cfr. Louis Jacquet, Vol 3, pp. 91, ff.

<sup>93</sup> cfr. Philip Goodman, *The Sukkot and Simhat Torah Anthology*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publications Society of America 5733/1973.



- eschatological: every festival was a promise. AT the end of time, in the view of Deutero-Zechariah, the Israelites, and all, will go up to the Holy City, to worship the kingship of the Lord, and all will keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The Lord will be king of the whole world (cfr Zc 14:9, 16).

## 2. ***He was speaking of the Spirit*** (cfr Jn 7:39):

There is an abundance of Exodus typology present, but this seems to be more spiritualized by the presentation of Deutero-Isaiah. As water on thirsty soil, and streams on the dry ground so the spirit of the Most High will pour out on the children of Israel (cfr Is 44:3). The water is placed in the wilderness, to show the “new creation” miracle that Israel might sing His praises (cfr Is 43:20) and put its life in accord with this worship.

The spirit will indeed “pour out” over the citizens of the Promised Land. These waters will be present and “alive” in all seasons of the year, at both extremities of the year (cfr Zc 14:8). Out from the House of David, the Holy City will be purified and bathed. The New Jerusalem will be the center of holiness and the ways of Yahweh. The transformation achieved by these waters will be a sublime change, deep within.

This fresh water is the gift of the Lord's salvation – for John, the Spirit is presented as the object of intense expectancy (cfr Jn 7:38), whose task will be sublimely personal (cfr Jn 16:7). This “coming” of the Spirit can only be achieved by Jesus' going back to the Father, through His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. The plan of infinite mercy of God costs the Son dearly, and rewards the adopted sons and daughters richly, for indeed, He is “rich in kindness”. Therefore, Jesus has specifically identified the “living waters” here with the Holy Spirit.

## 3. ***Whoever is thirsty . . . come and drink*** (cfr Jn 7:37, ff.).

John's rather “generic” appeal to “scripture” seems to indicate that with the Spirit promised, indeed the last times have come. The “thirst”, then, of Scripture, has profound roots and implications. Agonizing thirst was threatened in a number of instances:

- the unfaithful spouse will be reduced to a wasteland, and will perish of thirst (cfr Ho 2:5);
- the cities will go staggering looking for water to slake their thirst (cfr Am 4:8);
- the high and the mighty will be devoured by hunger, and the lowly will be devoured by thirst. Once again the “extremes” of society are mentioned to indicate its totality (cfr Is 5:13).
- those struggling through the day with a terrible thirst may dream that they have found the streams of fresh water – but will awaken to the same agonizing thirst (cfr Is 29:8).

While there is such repeated and graphic descriptions of the need for water in so many levels of Israel's history, one might attempt some kind of "classification" of these thirsts:

- there is no doubt that the experience was indeed a physical agony experienced a number of times by the people itself, and perhaps more often by unknown biblical writers, whose compositions have come down to us;

- but, the prophets spoke of a hunger and thirst for the word of God. Sometimes this was placed as a kind of threat – that after extended infidelity, they would indeed go looking for guidance from the Lord, and the Word would not be found (cfr Am 8:11);

- beyond the word, the spirit and all the images, there is also deeply with the heart of humanity, the natural quest for good and for truth. The yearning for God, for His temple is found in the panting, thirsting doe (cfr Ps 42); or the lonely exile, yearning for the Lord like thirsty ground (cfr Is 63), perhaps with nuptial overtones; there is also the humble, ardent prayer of the other psalmists who compares himself to thirsty ground and begs for God to teach His will. The psalmist prays with great ardor for the good spirit to lead him to level ground (cfr ps 143:6, ff.).

To keep hope alive, so many times the gifted writers of long ago wrote of the Lord sending water gushing into the ravines, of transforming the forbidding wastelands into a most inviting garden, with the renewal of the miracle of creation. The blessings will be on both the land, and the people:

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Land</b>    | <b>Abraham</b> |
|                | <b>Promise</b> |
| <b>Progeny</b> | <b>David</b>   |

- the land: once more the desert will be irrigated – even though right now it is without water (cfr Is 41:18). This means more than abundant harvests, and mere material blessings:

- the people: the "wretched of the earth", the "poor whom Yahweh loves" will look for water, and the Lord will provide it. These are not just the economically "poor" – but means those who truly seek the Lord with all their heart, mind and strength.

With this literal "flood" of texts, John's symbolism of "living water" and "thirst" goes far beyond the physical. The great evangelist of the Incarnation begins with a well-known physical agony, and draws his readers upward to higher levels. John would unite the natural thirst of creaturehood for fulfillment, and the Spirit of Truth that is sent by God. Ezechiel (cfr 36:25, ff.) had united the outpouring of the Spirit. The "hearts of stone" should be removed, and the risk of a "heart of flesh" would be implanted: only the "weak" are able to accept the strength of God. The Spirit will be commissioned with the special task of slaking the natural and life-long thirst for the truth within human beings. John is gradually leading the "thirsty" to faith in the divine Person of Jesus Christ. The Spirit has been seen descending upon Him (cfr Jn 1:33), and God has bestowed the Spirit upon Him without limit (cfr Jn 3:34, ff.).

#### 4. **From His Breast** (cfr Jn 7:38):

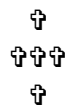
Rather than looking back, this verse seems to be projecting forward. Keeping in mind the missionary implications present in the episode of the Woman of Samaria, these “living waters” then will flow from deep within all those who have been refreshed by them. Jesus had explained that the living waters that He would give would become a spring within each of those who would come to Him and believe in Him, welling up unto eternal life (cfr Jn 4:10, ff.). The “living waters”, therefore, become a source of new life, as these flow out from the believer.

Here Jesus clearly offers the living waters to those who thirst. It is in Jesus that the symbols of the new creation and the new exodus are realized. From deep within Jesus will come those waters that permit true life. By receiving from Him, by being satiated with those “living waters”, in turn does each believer become a source of new life.

The Spirit will come only following the glorification of the Son, His return to the Father. This will always presuppose the reality of Calvary and the great promise of the Resurrection. By being imbued with these mysteries, and by modeling one’s life upon them, does the believer likewise become a kind of source of living water.

This discourse of Tabernacles offers a fitting commentary of an ancient tradition. Rain for the festival was always a good omen. The feast was always celebrated with “water processions”, up through the “Water Gate” into the Temple. The symbols of Tabernacles would be carried in procession: branches indicating the huts of old, and some indication of the harvest garnered. The motifs here are “wisdom”, acceptance of the revelation of God’s Word, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Just as manna really was the bread of heaven, and that Jesus was that living bread, so the water is a symbol of the Spirit that the resurrected Jesus will give. When Jesus “ex-pires”, blood and water will flow “from His breast”. The Tabernacles discourse offers profound insights into divine revelation and the coming of the Spirit. Interpreters also see symbolized here the sacrament of the baptism.<sup>94</sup>

Jesus Himself is the fulfillment of the hopes of the pilgrim people of God. Just as “in the beginning”, God created heaven and earth – before this, the Word “was, was with God, was God”. He, then, is the source of the New Creation, the new ground from which the streams of living water flow. In receiving from Him, one indeed can in some way serve as a source of living water – but the text, basically presents Jesus Christ as the source of living water.<sup>95</sup>




---

<sup>94</sup>cfr. Raymond Brown, *ibid.*, pp. 326-329, *passim*.

<sup>95</sup> cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol 2, New York: The Seabury Press. A Crossroad Book 1980, pp. 152-157, *passim*.

## PART TWO

### I. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES – BOOTHS – HUTS – TENTS - - *SUKKOT*<sup>96</sup>

#### A. The Feast of Tabernacles in the Hebrew Scriptures

[1] The old Liturgy contained three Pilgrimage Festivals in their calendar year:

- the Feast of Unleavened Bread, later joined with the Jewish PASCH, or Passover to make one spring-time celebration – this was the time of the early harvest of the barley – this celebrated the beginning of the **life-long Exodus Pilgrimage of Redemption**;
- Seven weeks later [7x7 & 1] at the beginning of summer the Feast of Weeks – this would be the harvest of early wheat – eventually this celebrated the giving of the **Torah**;
- in the Autumn of the year, the Feast of Tabernacles, the time of the harvest of the summer crops.

[2] All three of these Festivals eventually provided the framework for Israel's devotional life each year, coming to them from their neighbors and contemporaries. In the beginning these were agricultural, and became pastoral – thus bring about Communion with two different life-styles, potentially at odds with each other: the shepherds always needed more grazing grounds; the farmers did not want their lands trampled upon. This gave rise to early **Covenants**.

[3] These festivals of course, became 'historicized', and came to be associated with a specific event of redemption in Israel's history that would be celebrated in the course of their lives, and, perhaps in fact, reflecting these: the morning of Spring-time; the maturity of summer; and the lengthening shadows of life in the autumn of one's years.

[4] The Festival of Tabernacles came to receive different titles over the years:

- the Festival of Ingathering, in the earliest calendars [cf. Ex 23:16; 34:22];
- the Festival of Booths [sukkot] in the later calendars [Dt. 16:13, 16; Lv 23:34].

[a] This latter name, was eventually rendered in Latin as **Tabernacula [Booths, or Huts]**. Not terribly different from aspects of the USA **Thanksgiving Day**, for the ancient Israelites it became important as was the harvest that it celebrated - the festivities reflected life over the long late fall and winter, hoping for the spring rains.

[b] This became one of the most popular, and joy-filled celebrations of the entire year and so it came to be known popularly as **The Feast of the Lord** [Lv 23:39; Nb 29:12; Jgs 21:19 – or, THE Feast [1 K 8:2; Exk 45:25; Ne 8:14].

---

<sup>96</sup> Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John*. Zacchaeus Studies: NT. Wilmington : GLAZIER 1989, c. 3, pp. 70-82, *passim*.

[5] The two names for Tabernacles highlight **dual aspects** that Feast assumed – **both of these features were memorialized in readings, song and sacrifice:**

- on the one hand the Feast of Ingathering is a celebration of **Thanksgiving** – God has kept His word: if you keep the commandments, **you will come to the land of milk and honey, abundance!**

- on the other hand, **Booths** also remembers God's protection of them during their harsh desert journey.

[6] The central feature of Ingathering was the **joyous** [bear, wine] **harvest** [not unlike the *bacchinalia*, the **Munich festival**] - there were the **luscious grapes, the olives, matured over the long hot summer**. Thus the date was not clearly established calendar-wise as the time for harvesting could differ from year to year [cf. Ex 23:16; Dt 16:13]. Much carousing developed over-eating, over-drinking. The carefree sipping of the New Wine, long awaited, - the priest in Kings mistook Hannah's religious joy as intoxication – her dancing before the Lord was seen as revelry and she was falsely judged [cf. 1 S 1:14, f.]. **Liturgical dance** was much used here [cf. Jgs 21:19-23]. The Benjaminites got carried away, and unjustly carried off the dancing women at Shiloh [Jgs 21:19; 1 S 1:3].

[7] The earliest calendars concluded with the addition of injunctions with the passing of the generations, and there came this stipulation: ***Three times a year shall all your males make an appearance before the Lord God*** [Ex 23:17; 34:23] Tabernacles over the years developed into a more formal religious pilgrimage festival from its agricultural and village celebrations.

[a] The first encounter the scripture reader has with the Festival of **Booths, Tabernacles**, is found in the later work, **Deuteronomy 16:13**. A principal feature of this celebration was that the booths were set up, lean to's, with leafy bows and branches – placed near the fields until the harvest was completed. These '**Tents**' provided temporary dwelling for those joining in the harvest for the picking season – obviating the need to take the longer trek to their homes.

[b] An added feature was the precept: **You shall keep the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days [v. 13]**. This Pilgrimage Festival, therefore, became **a week long celebration**.

[c] The most developed legislation governing this time is found in this text: **Leviticus 23:23-25, 33-36, 39-43:**

... The Lord God spoke to Moses and said: ' Speak to the Israelites and say: **The first day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month** will be a day of rest for you of remembrance and acclamation, a sacred assembly/ You will do no heavy work and you will offer food burnt for the Lord...

The Feast of Shelters:

Speak to the Israelites and say: **On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of this 7<sup>th</sup> month there will be the Feast of Shelters for the Lord God, lasting for 7 days**. The first day will be a day of sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work. For 7 days you will offer

food burnt for the Lord God. ON the eighth day you will hold a sacred assembly and you will offer food burnt for the Lord God. It is a day of solemn meeting; you will do no heavy work...

Recapitulation on the Feast of Shelters [This passage is a post-exilic addition emphasizing the joyful character of the Feast, in the manner of Dt 16:13-16], linking to it memories of the harsh Exodus journey of life].

But on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you will celebrate the Feast of the Lord God for 7 days. The 1<sup>st</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> days will be days of rest. On the first day you will take choice fruit, palm branches, boughs of leafy trees and flowering shrubs from the river bank, and for 7 days you will enjoy yourselves before the Lord God. You will celebrate a Feast for the Lord God in this way for 7 days every year. This is a perpetual law doe your descendants.

You will keep the Feast in the 7<sup>th</sup> month. For 7 days you will live in shelters: all the citizens of Israel will live in shelters, so that your descendants may know that made the Israelites live in shelters when I brought them out of Egypt, I, the Lord your God ....

[d] This calendar specified an exact date for the feast: ... On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of this 7<sup>th</sup> month there will be the Feast of Shelters for the Lord God, lasting for 7 days...! The '7<sup>th</sup> Month' was Tishri, somewhere in between latter September and early October, and that's right where we are tonight! It stipulated that the 1<sup>st</sup> day should be solemn rest – an '8<sup>th</sup> Day' was added to the Festival, on which the People came together for prayer and sacrifice. This Day was set apart from the 7 days of festivities and served as a **conclusion** for the feast now to help the people make the transition back to normal life.

[e] John Paul II adds an explanation here in his beautiful Apostolic Letter<sup>97</sup> on ***Keeping Holy*** the Lord's Day, entitled: ***Dies Domini*** :

#### 26. The Eighth Day: Image of Eternity:

By contrast the Sabbath's position as the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week suggests for the Lord's Day a complementary symbolism, much loved by the Fathers [of the Church]. Sunday is not only the 1<sup>st</sup> Day, it is also the '8<sup>th</sup> Day', set within the sevenfold succession of days in a unique and transcendent position which evokes not only the beginning of time, but also its end, 'in the age to come'. Saint Basil [On the Holy Spirit] explains that Sunday symbolizes that truly singular day which will follow the present time, the day without end which will know neither evening nor morning, the imperishable age which will never grow old; Sunday is the ceaseless foretelling of life without end which renews the Hope of Christians and encourages the ages then on their way. Looking toward the Last Day which fulfills completely the eschatological symbolism of the Sabbath, Saint Augustine in his *Confessions* describing the *Eschaton* as 'the peace of quietness, the peace of the Sabbath, a peace with no evening. In celebrating Sunday, both the 'first' and the '8<sup>th</sup>' day, the Christian is led toward the goal of eternal life ...

<sup>97</sup> Solemnity of Pentecost, May 31, 1998, # 26

**[8]** Regarding the **Seven Festal Days** [like the Creation story celebrating life and light], Lv 23:40 **continues and provides new historical and hopeful reasons to celebrate:**

**... On the first day you will take choice fruit, palm branches, boughs of leafy trees and flowering shrubs from the river bank, and for 7 days you will enjoy yourselves before the Lord God...**

**[a]** We see that v. 40 preserved preserved the aspect of the festive time as **one of rejoicing**. Although the purpose of the fruit was not given at this point, the Rabbis would take up the matter in their deliberations. The various branches were used to construct the booths, shelters, 'lean to's', housing the harvesters for the duration of the celebration. According to a **post-Exilic text**, the people **in later times**, erected these huts on their roofs, in their court-yards, in the courts of the Temple, and in the different squares in Jerusalem [cf. Ne 8:16]. Not only used to build the original huts and shelters, **the branches were also carried by the joyful worshippers during all the happy festivities** of which they were a part [ 2 M 10:6-8; Ps 118:27].

**[b]** **Lv 23:42-43** adds an important dimension to all the celebrations: that of **reflection**:

**... You will keep this Feast in the Seventh Month. For seven day you will live in Shelters: all the citizens of Israel will live in shelters, so that your descendants may know that I made the Israelites live in shelters when I brought them out of Egypt, I, the Lord your God ...**

For the first time, the Feast was associated with a particular period in the salvation history of the people: **their time in the wilderness**, after their dramatic flight from the Land of Slavery – when they had no homes of their own. Tabernacles thus becomes ***historicized***, a Feast gather **an assembly of each generation to remember the days of old**, when **the Lord God in His mercy protected and cared for His Beloved People** in the ever-threatening wilderness. Although **some traditions of the ancient Hebrews regarded the wilderness time idyllic engagement for the eventual nuptials** [e.g. Ho 2:14-23] – this was the time when the Lord Himself bent down over the crib to give His infant something to eat, and then **God Himself, Merciful Father, taught them how to walk, to follow His words as lamp under the feet** [ Ho 11:1-4; Dt 32:10-14] These were the images that the People recalled while living in their huts for the Festivities of Tabernacles.

**[c]** **The Prophet Zechariah 14:** at this juncture, the Feast assumed a **new spiritual dimension: eschatological significance: the winter rains for the new growing season!** This passage would be read on the **1<sup>st</sup> Day of the Festivities to elevate its joyful tenor**: this envisioned **all the surviving nations going up to Jerusalem to worship God for the ultimate Festival of Tabernacles**: the Prophet even warned that if they did not participate in the Pilgrimage, **there would be no rain upon them!** [Zc 14:17]. A Prayer for Rain can be found earlier in Zc 10:1. Although the **theme of rain** was not present in earlier texts, it is **highly likely** that

**Prayers for Rainfall** had been part of the sacred ceremony since the earliest times. The autumn feast coincided with the beginning of the rainy season which was sorely needed after the scorching summer months.

[d] Earlier in **Zc 14**: the rain motif was connected with the theme of light: as the introduction to the Gospel of Glory, Jn 13, after the washing with water of the feet by the Lord, Judas went out into the **Night** after betraying the **Light of the World!** Some texts:

- Zc 14:6-9:

... On that day, there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day [it is known to the Lord], not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea, and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter.

And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and His Name one [Zc 14:6-9].

- **Psalm 118, one of the Hallel Psalms sung during Tabernacles** also emphasizes the Light. The reference to the leafy boughs that were carried in the Festal Procession [cf. 2 M 10:6-8]. The themes of Water and Light would dominate certain temple rituals of the Feast as they were described in the earliest Rabbinic codification of Jewish Laws, the Mishnah:

... The Lord is God and He has given us Light. Bind the Festal Procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar... [Ps 118:27].

†††

## **B. The Feast of Tabernacles in the Gospel of John**

Clearly, this Festival provides the backdrop for Jn 7 & 8. The 4<sup>th</sup> Evangelist arranges his episodes regarding Jesus in three distinct time periods during the Tabernacles Season:

- **before** the Feast [7:1-13];
- during the **middle** of the Feast [7:14-36];
- the **Last Day** of the Festival [7:37-52; 8: 12-59].

In each particular scene, Jn throws into relief the speculation and misunderstanding of the Jerusalem citizenry over Jesus' genuine identity.

†

### **[I] Before the Feast Begins [Jn 7:1-13]**

1. Jesus remains in Galilee and would not go to Judea as His enemies wanted to kill Him [c. v. 7; 5:16]. Yet, Tabernacles was at hand and all makes were under the obligation to show up to make the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The question of His going – including the possibility of His being killed – comes up. He is encouraged to



go up for this festival and perhaps to 'show off' a bit His dazzling abilities. Jn adds, perhaps with some poignancy: ***For even his own brothers did not believe in Him...*** [v.5] His own kin have come to enjoy the signs but **do not go any more deeply into the mystery of this Person and His actions.**

2. Jesus takes things the way they are – and feels their inadequate faith: ***My time has not yet come but your time is always here!*** [v. 6]. His brothers understood this superficially thinking that He did not think this was a good time to be in the Holy City. Jesus, though, seems already to be permeated with the idea of the **integral Paschal Mystery**: His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. The **specific Hour** is reserved for a future festival in the following spring time.

3. This will be His Third Passover of His public life – for this, He does **go up**, but in secret. At this time, the authorities look for Him asking pointedly: **Where is that Man?** They really want to arrest Him and accuse Him of what they feel are His irregularities before the Law. The views among the people are ambivalent: there is a clear division among them – some insist that **He is a good man**; but others harshly point out that **He is leading the people astray.** [vv. 10-12]. Yet, their honest opinions were mostly kept to themselves for fear of those in power.



## **[II] During the Middle of the Feast [Jn 7:14-36]**

1. Jesus resumes from Jn 5 the whole question of the **Sabbath**. His argument is that if circumcision [a Jewish ritual] took precedence over the Sabbath, - so all the more vital would **the healing of a human person** transcend the Sabbath [cf. vv. 21-24] Jesus insists on **the Mystery of His Person** in referring to His 'work' – He insists on **teaching solely what the Father teaches Him**. And **does nothing of His own.**

2. The reactions to His message always vary – showing the deep level of misunderstanding about His Person. Some Jerusalemites wonder how can one Who is 'wanted' by the civil authorities, speak so openly in the temple. Theologically, what they see in Jesus' bold proclamations is **blasphemy** – and His openness makes some wonder whether He has persuaded some of the influential among the 'authorities/.' Is He truly the **Messiah**? In the **eschatological spirit of Tabernacles**, some of their suspicions seem to gain momentum.

3. Yet, the more popular theology of the coming Christ urges great caution in this volatile matter – Jesus simply does not measure up to some of their expectations. No one knows where the Messiah will come from, but, everyone seems to know that Jesus is from Galilee [cf. vv. 25-27]. Jesus is frustrated by the blatant ignorance surrounding His Person and Mission: some want to arrest Him, even put Him to death - yet, others believe He is indeed the Messiah, and they ask the open question: **when the Messiah does not indeed appear, will He perform more signs than this One does?** Yet, even this more benevolent view of Him displays profound misunderstanding and appreciate more his wonderful signs rather than the message they convey [cf. vv. 28-31]

4. The Pharisees monitor closely this dissension and discussion. They and the priests want the police to arrest Him. Jesus keeps the police at bay by making it very clear He will not be around much longer – He will return to the One Who sent Him and they will not be able to find Him. Jn does present a graphic picture of the complete and utter mystification that the Jews experience in His regard in this chapter. It is simply not known Who Jesus really is! [vv. 32-36]: ... ***what does He mean when He says: you will look for Me and will not find Me; where I am, you cannot come...!***



### [III] The Last and Greatest Day of the Week of Tabernacles [Jn 7:37-8:59]

The disorder and confusion intensify and reach a serious climax on this final day of what is meant to be a joyful celebration. Jesus does not disappoint believers in their Joy and Hope: the fresh water will come, from His side! On the 7<sup>th</sup> Day, Priests pass through the **Water Gate** and encircle the sacred altar symbolically 7 times with the waters drawn from the Waters of Siloam. IN the solemnity of this sacred Libation Ritual, Jesus proclaims: ***...If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me as the scripture has said, Out of His side shall flow strams of living water... He was speaking of the Spirit...there was no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified ... !*** [cf. Is 12:1, ff.; Jn 7:38, ff. ].



1. This verse has a long history, and perhaps can be boiled down to two major interpretations: **Jesus is the Source of the Living Water** – or, **the Believers are meant to be**. The more convincing persuasion for the authoress here that **Jesus Himself is the ultimate Fountain of the inexhaustible Streams of Salvation** – and converted **believers become His Faithful Witnesses**, and collaborators. This Water is clearly identified here with the Holy Spirit Who will be given after Jesus' glorification – this is **a Pneumatological interpretation**. The Christological interpretation is most in harmony, too, with **Jn's spiritualization of Israel's ancient festivals and institutions**, seeing them **all fulfilled in Jesus Christ**.

2. No one knows the verse to which Jesus refers: **...as Scripture says...!** There is no exact text that the Lord has in mind here – answers are intimately connected with one's understanding **the ultimate Font of Living Water**. Ass Pius XIIth made clear in his 1956 Encyclical, **Haurietis Aquas**, there is a variety, or even **a plethora of texts that may be hinted at here:**

- surely, **Zc 14:8**, describes **living water** that will burst forth from **the New Jerusalem and its Water Gate** much in the news every Festival of Tabernacles;
- **Ezk 47: 1-5** had a dream of a new Temple with fresh waters flowing from under its right side – **from this gate, healing, life-giving waters will fecundate the deserts of the world and those of the human heart;**
- **Water Libations** in the desert of a later age would qualify here, too;

- **The New Moses** will once again tap the Rock to bring forth new water, abundant Streams of salvation.

3. If Jn indeed does intend that Jesus is the ultimate **Font of the Living water** [the majority view] he draws on His own rich Jewish up-bringing for His **discourse on Tabernacles** using images with which His listeners would be most familiar. Jesus Himself **is** the **New Temple**, from Whom **streams of living water and salvation** will burst forth. He will be the **New Rock**, the side of Whom is tapped to **quench the thirst of believers' faith**. They **become the faithful** by **partaking of the Streams of Salvation**, the **New Moses** providing for the **New People of God in the desert** of a later time. Jn will symbolize this **Living Water** in that which will flow together with His **Precious Blood** from His **opened and pierced side**. [cf. **Jn 19:34**] Only **after the glorification of the integral Paschal Mystery** will the **Holy Spirit be poured forth**, Whom **the Living Water** represents.

4. Jn also taps into the other imagery here, the **Light**: He Himself replaces that light radiating from the candelabra, **He is indeed the Light of the World**. ***Anyone who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life*** [cf. 8:12]. There is an abundance of biblical imagery here: He is **the Bread of Life** [6:25] - the **Light of Life** - He provides **the streams of Living Water**. His influence will go far beyond the narrow confines of the earthly Jerusalem.

5. The metaphor of **Light** accords well with Jn's penchant towards paradoxical symbols: **life is set against death** in all its forms [3:38] - **what is above** is distinct from what is below [8:23] - **truth** is always hostile to lies [8:44-46] - and **light eliminates the darkness**. The divine life empowering Jesus serves as **the light of humanity shining through the darkness**, a **darkness that could not extinguish that Light** [from the Prologue, 1: 4, ff.] **Evil-doers hate the Light for fear of being exposed** - those who do good come more and more into the Light, **so that their deeds can be seen** [3:19-21]. The **Light shining through human weakness is Jesus, His own Father's Light of all life**. Jesus is sent to **bring the Light of the Father's Mercy**, to **be a Lamp unto the feet of Faithful Witnesses**.

6. These two images of Jesus : **the Font of Living Water, the streams of Salvation** - and the **Light of the World** - provoke controversy in the divided populace there for the Festival of Tabernacles : ... ***there was a division among the people over Him...!*** [7:43]. Some wonder [like the well-disposed **Woman of Samaria**, in Jn 4] if Jesus is **the Prophet like unto Moses** [Dt 18:1] - who will once again provide **Water from the Rock**. Others, think Jesus is the **Messiah** indeed - others want to arrest Him, although the Temple Police are awed by Jesus and refrain from doing anything. Dissension flourishes around His Person and His Mission - Nicodemus takes Jesus' side and so is sternly repudiated [9:45-52].

7. The debate rages and Hus proclaims that He is indeed **the Light of the World!** Jn often uses a telling expression about **Jesus' claims of divinity**, present in His oft-repeated: **I AM!** Here for Tabernacles, Jesus open proclaims: **I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!** He warns sinners about **dying in their sins** - unless they will accept His fundamental lesson: **I AM!** [8:24] - and they still do not understand -

**Who are You?** This is the question that needs to be asked [**Who do you say that I am?!**] and Jesus has revealed this to them from the beginning – He is Go's only-Begotten, Most beloved Son, sent for their salvation. When they lift Him up then they will come to find out what His I am! - means. He speaks in behalf of God the Father Himself [8:28]. This Hard saying is not accepted by them. Those who reject Jesus are children of the devil [8:43-44]. His strongest argument: *before Abraham was, I am!* [8:58, f.] – is rejected as **scandalous blasphemy**.

†††

### CONCLUSION:

Jn's style is to exploit the liturgical celebrations, such as Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles - to articulate His own theology of the Person and Mission of Jesus. Jesus is called to replace the ancient Jewish ritual in His own Person. For Tabernacles, Jesus is the New Temple from Whom the Streams of Living Water will flow. He is the New Moses Who will tap the Stone and bring up water for those suffering their Desert Exodus. He is the New Light for Tabernacles. He becomes more and more forceful in His I AM proclamations, and this reiterate His divinity claims. In the end: those who believe are of the Light, God – those who refuse to believe are children of the devil!

†††

### C. The Feast of Tabernacles in the Apocalypse 7:9-17

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

11 And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?"

14\* I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they stand before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.

16\* They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17\* For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

✠✠✠

### **Presentation** <sup>98</sup>

[1] A **Celebration of the autumnal Feast of 'Huts'** is the usual interpretation of these verses: in various stages of Israel's History this was the most important of all their festivals. The Apocalypse presents this as Worship in actually Heaven – and the imagery really is that of **Sukoth**. For many, this is the **Liturgy of the New Jerusalem** [cf. Rv 21:1-22:5, with the Bride all dressed for her Husband, descending from Heaven. There are many authors who believe that all of the Liturgy of the Apocalypse is based on **Booths**. Some scholars hold that Rv. 7:1-17 are influenced by **Zc 14** with an **eschatological focus** on the Feast of **Tents**, another name for the same. This is all fulfilled in the universal celebration depicted in Rv 7.

[2] To assist in the acceptance of their views, scholars offer as summary of Zc 14: this chapter concentrates on an apocalyptic vision of the **New Jerusalem** and may be divided as follows:

- **Zc 14:1-5**: the prediction of a **future battle** for a **New Jerusalem** between the Lord God and the hostile nations;
- **Zc 14: 6-11**: the **utopia** of the New Jerusalem;
- **Zc 14: 12-15**: description of the **plague** that will infect the enemies of Jerusalem;
- **Zc 14: 16-21**: the **Pilgrimage of all Nations** toward the New Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles and the **sanctification of the final times**.

[3] These scholars, then, see many connecting links between Zc 14 & Rv 7 referring to the '**Little Remnant**' – even though there is **no specific mention of the re-gathering of the tribes**. In this sense, Rv 7 speaks of the Gentiles making this annual pilgrimage going up to Jerusalem, celebrating in harmony with these verses:

... 16 Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths. 17 And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be **no rain** upon them. 18\* And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall \* come **the plague** with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up **to keep the feast of booths**. 19 This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not **go up to keep the feast of booths**... [**Zc 14:16, ff. – the Conclusion of the Minor Prophet here in the verses that follow**]...

[4] **Rv 7** reflects clearly on a few aspects of Zc 14 , but these features seem most evident:

- the **Festal gathering** [v. 9];
- concentration on the **Temple** [vv. 9 b, 15];
- the worshippers' **palm branches** [v. 9 c];
- the acclamation of **salvation** [v. 10];

---

<sup>98</sup> David E. Aune, *Revelation 6 – 16. Word Biblical Commentary*, 52 B. Nashville: Nelson 1998, pp.448-450; 466- 480, *passim*.

- allusion to the **Living Water** [v. 17].

A more 'severe' approach on the part of some interpreters is to point out that these parallels do not seem sufficient to demonstrate the author's conscious intention was to make use of the traditional features associated with the Feast of Booths to portray that **final gathering** before the Lord.

[5] The **Exodus Pattern** in general is seen by many as important not only for Rv 7 but for the whole mysterious book for the depiction of **the entire Christian Vocation** as the redeemed people of God, **His New People** – all liberated from the land of slavery and **on their inexorable desert journey of hardships toward the Promised Land**. There is evident in these efforts at interpretation a real sense of **festive joy** in the celebration of the Lord's Solemnity. The **Liturgical activity** before the Throne of God, **waving palm branches**, shouting **praise to God in great exultation**, would fit in well with **the traditional celebration of Booths**.

[6] However, the main emphasis here is not so much in the Liturgical imagery which is present, but much more in its **theological implications**. The scholars are **not** necessarily seizing upon the various revealed expressions, **striving to trace the vague outlines of a liturgical ritual of an ancient traditional celebration of Tabernacles** – one of the emphases scholars to make is **eschatological, the celebration at the end of all time of the final festival**. There are many **points of theological and spiritual interest** to be noted in the verses that follow:



**v. 9:** After this I looked, and behold, **a great multitude** which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...

a. This seems to represent a contrast with Rv 7:4, where it is heard that the 144,000 [12x 12] as **innumerable**. These verses are not a vision, but a **hearing**, he has been told this number. This is the message for those in *diaspora*, far from home This is the ***multitude ingens*** – **the immense crowd** reminiscent of Tacitus' account of those slaughtered by Nero. St. Clement of Rome spoke of the unnamed martyrs a **great multitude of the Elect**. St. Justin calls them an **innumerable multitude**.

b. Thus, the **prophecy made to Abraham, our Father in the faith**, is here fulfilled. There are two distinct aspects in the tradition of the centuries:

- the **promise** comparable to the **dust of the earth, the sands of the sea, the stars of the sky** [cf. Gn 13:16; 15:5; 16:10] – this **promise was then repeated to Isaac** [Gn 26:4] and to **Jacob** [Gn 28:14; 32:12]. This promise is frequently repeated in a variety of contexts [Ex 32:13; Dt 1:10; 10:22; 28:61; 2 S 17:11; 1 K 3:8; 4:20; Ne 9:23; Is 10:22; 48:19; 51:2; Ho 1:10; Si 44:21 – Rm 9:2; **Heb 11:12**, the **cloud of witnesses**:

8\* By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11\* By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12\* Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

- the promise that Abraham would be the Father of many nations: [Gn 17:4-6, 16] – a promise later made to **Isaac** and **Jacob** [Gn 28:14; 32:11; 35:11; 48:19], much emphasized by Christian authors [cf. Rm 4:16-18]. Occasionally the notion of a **census** was seen to conflict the promises made by God regarding numbers, to Abraham [1 Ch 27:23; 21:1-6: this passage implies that the ancient promise to Abraham has truly been fulfilled in some way: the **spiritualization** of the promise is found in Rm 9:6-13. Paul [Ga 3:16] interprets **Abraham's off-spring** to mean **Jesus Christ**.

c. The enormous size of this group [in the millions??] is striking since the number of Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, living at this time could not have been very large. There is little evidence from this time for precision maybe 70,000 Jewish converts, and 40, 000 gentile Christians – but no one can claim to be sure.

d. **v. 9 b**: boils it down to the one nation, Israel. The promise to Abraham took two forms, innumerable descendants and the father of many nations. A similar comprehensive enumeration of social and national groups emphasizes the **catholicity, the international character** of the Christian Church. This is evident elsewhere in Rv [5:9; 10:11; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15]. The Israelites usually described the 'righteous' as a more restricted group. There are several parallels in **Daniel** which is its origin [3:4, 7, 29; 5:19; 6:26].

e. **Standing before the Throne and the Lamb, dressed in white robes with palm branches in their hands** – the royal chair is a circumlocution for God Himself [cf. 4:10; 8:3]. The white garments are the rewards of those in Sardis who have not soiled their robes [cf. also 3:5] This vesture seems to symbolize garments of a heavenly existence, or worthiness of heaven, as even God Himself [cf. Dn 7:2; 2 M 11:8; - and the **Transfiguration**: Mk 17:2; Mk 9:3; LK 9:29]. **Palm Branches** were symbol of Victory – in Egypt, it meant length of life after death – in Israel, this was the vesture for **Tabernacles**. They were the symbol of **blessing**. Roman General would wear the **toga palmate** to celebrate a triumph. An indication reaches 1 M 13:36, f., 51:

35 Demetrius the king sent him a favorable reply to this request, and wrote him a letter as follows, 36 "King Demetrius to Simon, the high priest and friend of kings, and to the elders and nation of the Jews, greeting. 37 We have received the gold crown and the palm branch which you \* sent, and we are ready to make a general peace with you and to write to our officials to grant you release from tribute.

... 51 On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred and seventy-first year, \* the Jews \* entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel...

... 3 Now a certain Alcimus, who had formerly been high priest but had wilfully defiled himself in the times of separation, realized that there was no way for him to be safe or to have access again to the holy altar, 4 and went to King Demetrius in about the one hundred and fifty-first year, \* presenting to him a crown of gold and a palm, and besides these some of the customary olive branches from the temple. During that day he kept quiet... [2 M 14:4].

f. This is all reminiscent of **Palm Sunday**, a kind of victory is being celebrated - in anticipation :

... 12\* The next day a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13\* So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" 14 And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written, 15\* "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt!" 16\* His disciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him. 17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead bore witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see that you can do nothing; look, the world has gone after him." [Jn 12]

g. Jews carried **Palm Branches** around the city and into the **Temple for the Feast of Tabernacles**. They were tied together [cf. Lv 23:40], and Nehemiah [Ne 8] sees them as part of the **Booths for Sukkoth** :

... 13 On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the law. 14 And they found it written in the law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written." 16 So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths; for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. 18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance...

**v. 10:** and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"



a. This short cry of **Victory** is an expression of well founded hope, a **proleptic [anticipated, thrust forward] celebration of the eschatological triumph of God**. This is what the Psalms sing: ...

3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.  
4 I cry aloud to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy hill. [Selah] 5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the LORD sustains me. 6 I am not afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about. 7 Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! For thou dost smite all my enemies on the cheek, thou dost break the teeth of the wicked. 8 Deliverance belongs to the LORD; thy blessing be upon thy people! [Selah] [Psalm 3- a song of David, hunted by his wayward son, Absalom]

... 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to thee; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!" 10 And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. [Jon 2].

The word **soteria** is not solely religious in tone but in the Apocalypse it does refer to victory in the time of persecution and trial for the People of God – **the Apocalypse provides readings for the sacrifice of Thanksgiving in the celebration of the immolated Lamb Who alone can open the scrolls of the Scriptures:**

... 10\* And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12\* Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" [Rv. 12].

... AFTER this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2\* for his judgments are true and just... [Rv 19]

b. **Victory** [a model of Redemption, take from the military world] indeed **belongs to God**, **a dative of possession**, in the style of the Apocalypse:

... 4\* John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5\* and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6\* and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7\* Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 8\* "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. [Rv 1]

... the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. 8\* And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and

night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 9\* And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, 11 "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created." [Rv 4],

... 11\* Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!" 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped... [Rv 5].

... 11 And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."... [Rv 7].

c. This celebrates the Lord's ancient victory over the Sea, in **Creation and in Redemption**:

... 10 When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were in great fear. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD; 11 and they said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt? 12\* Is not this what we said to you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.'"

13 And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be still."

15 The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. 16 Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go on dry ground through the sea. 17 And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

... 26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen."

27 So Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its wonted flow when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled into it, and the LORD routed\* the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 The waters

returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host\* of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not so much as one of them remained.

29 But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. 31 And Israel saw the great work which the LORD did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the LORD; and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. [Ex 14: Victory at Sea].

d. This phrase echoes as a Hosannah for the ancient **Divine Victory over the desert, the darkness and the deep**, down over the centuries, used at the Feast of Tabernacles according to the ancient traditions. Here **salvation** refers to deliverance from all tribulation – this belongs to God alone Who has sealed, marked His servants on their foreheads and protected them:

... 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. 21 I thank thee that thou hast answered me and hast become my salvation. 22\* The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. 23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25\* Save us, we beseech thee, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech thee, give us success! 26 Blessed be he who enters in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. 27 The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar! 28 Thou art my God, and I will give thanks to thee; thou art my God, I will extol thee. 29 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever! ... [Ps 118]

v. 11: And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures [cherubim], and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God ...

a. There are three categories of heavenly beings: Angels, Elders, Cherubim. It may be of interest to note that no Angel, or Cherubim, in Rv are ever described as seated – the Elders, however, are found seated [Rv 4:4] – the simplest explanation is that the angels had no knees! While no one would ever sit in the presence of God the 24 Elders are an exception – all others stand around the Throne of the Most High:

... 11\* Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!..." [Rv 5].

b. The adoration of heavenly beings who fall prostrate before the Throne of God is usually limited to the 24 Elders [4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4]. Here they are joined by the Angels encircling the Throne and the 4 living creatures – in 5:8, the Object of such adoration is the **Lamb Himself**.

**v. 12:** ... saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."...

a. This is the **Doxology** in response to the **Song of Victory** in v. 10. The traditional seven attributes are ascribed to God – a similar list is here attributed to the **Lamb**. Four of these attributes used here, occur in doxologies only in Rv 4:9; 5:12.

b. The attribution of **WISDOM** to God, found only here in Rv, also occurs elsewhere in the NT:

... 49\* \* Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute'... [Lk11].

... 22\* For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23\* but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men... [1 Co 1].

... 6\* Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7\* But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. 8\* None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9\* But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," 10\* God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12\* Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13\* And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. [1 Co 2]

**v. 13:** ... Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" ...

a. This 'address' is not so much a response to an unspoken question, but reflects the Hebrew verb *ana*, meaning: begin to speak, answered and said: referring to something that has already happened [cf. Is 14:10; 11:14; 12:35; 15:12; Lk 14:3; Jn 2:18; 5:7; Ac 3:12].

b. One of the distinctive characteristics of Rv is that the author never asks the meaning of any of the many symbols noted in his visions. Yet, here the Elder

volunteers to interpret the scene for the Seer, a variation on the motif of the angelus interpretes, the interpreting angel - noted in Jewish apocalyptic literature [cf. Dn 7:9-18, an OT 'Transfiguration']:

9\* As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. 10\* A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

11 I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

13\* I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14\* And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me. 16 I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made known to me the interpretation of the things.

17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever and ever.'

**v. 14:** ... 14\* I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb...

a. While angelic beings are never considered to be omniscient, knowledge is one of the most prominent qualities associated with them. A similar response was made by Ezk 37:3]:

... HE hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; \* it was full of bones. 2 And he led me round among them; and behold, there were very many upon the valley; \* and lo, they were very dry.

3 And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest."

4 Again he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5\* Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath \* to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath \* in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

b. There follows the **stylistic, demonstrative explanations**, found in other literary genres such as **the lengthy detailed descriptions of a work of art**. One of the distinctive characteristics of Rv is that the question-and-answer form,

typical of many Jewish and Christian apocalypses, is almost totally missing. **Demonstrative explanations** however, occur five times [Rv 7:14; 11:4; 14:4; 20:5, 14] – however, the question is asked not by John, but by one of the heavenly visitors.

c. Those who **have emerged from the great tribulation** – is in the past tense. The **martyrdom of Christians** is a process that will not be completed as the **eschatological consummation remains in the unknown future**. The **great tribulation** assumes that the readers know the **final tribulation, the period of woes** – that will introduce the **eschaton** is first mentioned in **Dn 12:1** and other places:

... AT\* that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. **And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book.** 2\* **And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** 3\* **And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.** 4\* But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and **knowledge shall increase.**"

... 4 These are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: 5 "Thus says the LORD: We have heard a **cry of panic, of terror, and no peace.** 6 Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? 7 Alas! **that day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.** .. [Jr 30].

... 7 And when **you hear of wars and rumors of wars**, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but **the end is not yet.** 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; **this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs.**

9\* "But **take heed to yourselves**; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11\* And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, **do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.** 12 And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 13\* and **you will be hated** by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. 14\* "But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 15 let him who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything away; 16 and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle. 17\* And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! 18 Pray that it may not happen in winter.

19 **For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be.** 20 And if the Lord had not shortened the days, no human being would be saved; but **for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.** 21 And then if any one says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. 22\* False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 **But take heed**; I have told you all things beforehand. [Mk 13].

... 21\* For then **there will be great tribulation**, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be... Mt 24:6-28].

d. The **Elect** will emerge **victorious from the eschatological war**. The **great tribulation** came from a select series of events as the early Christians regarded their experience of persecution and opposition as part of this eschatological period, presaging the end of the world [cf. Rv 1:9; 2:9; Mk 13: 9-20; Mt 10:16-23; 24:9-22; Lk 21:12-24; Ac 8:1].

e. They washed their robes and made them white by the Blood of the Lamb: there is a close parallel in **Rv 22:14**, offered in the context of a blessing: ... **14\* Blessed are those who wash their robes, \* that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates** :

*... Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. 10 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments, 11 and be ready by the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12\* And you shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death; 13 no hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.'" When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day... [Ex 19].*

*... 35 and some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and to cleanse them \* and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed... [Dn 11].*

*10 Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white... [Dn12].*

This washing is all part of the ritual of **purification**.

f. In the context of the **time of distress** the 'wise' are said to have been **tested, refined, and made shining white**. Jn interprets the purification noted in Dn to be that of the **martyrs** who **purify themselves through martyrdom**. **To be made white by the blood of the Lamb**: is a paradoxical metaphor like these:

*... 5\* Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." 6\* And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth ... [Rv 5:5, f.]*

*... 17\* For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." [Rv 7].*

**g. The Blood of the Lamb:** occurs once more in Rv [12:11]:

*... 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12\* Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" ..*

The notion of **atonement** is absent, though the idea of **martyrdom** is very present. The **Blood of the Lamb**, the **Blood of Christ** [1 Co10:16; Ep1:7; 2:13; 1 P 1:19; Heb 9:14] – the **Blood of Jesus** [1 P 1:2; Heb 10:19; 1 Jn 1:7] implies **the death of Christ**, the **atoning death of Christ**. This language is drawn from the **practice of expiatory sacrifice in Israelite-Jewish cultic tradition**. As is well known, the Israelite sacrificial ritual placed great emphasis on the significance of the blood in its use of various **purifying** and **atoning** rituals. The central texts would be these:

... 12 and shall take part of the blood of the bull and put it upon the horns of the altar with your finger, and the rest of\* the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar... [Ex 29].

... 50 and shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water, 51 and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the scarlet stuff, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the bird that was killed and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. 52 Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet stuff... [Lv 14].

... 10\* "If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the 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. 12 Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood... [Lv 17:11 – this is the central text!].

**h. The Blood of Jesus cleanses, purifies** – the implication in all of this is that the **innumerable multitude** made up largely of martyrs who are in heaven [12:11; 15:2]:

... 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your \* conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. \* 16 For where a will \* is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. 17 For a will \* takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. 18 Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. 19\* For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. 22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins... [Heb 9].



... 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10\* If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us... [1 Jn 1:9].

i. The book of Genesis offers a most unusual text:

... 11 Binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes; 12 his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk...[Gn 49].

... 18 "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." [Is 1].

Being washed, or **dipped in blood**, has been interpreted in three major ways: **martyrdom - baptism - victory, purity, holiness – festal participation**. The metaphor of **white robes** is well understood in this context - they are washed white by the Blood of the Lamb, i.e., the sins of those who wear them have been atoned by the sacrificial death of Christ – scarlet sins are made as white as snow.

**v. 15:** ... 1 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence...

a. The **martyrs** are able to stand before God in heaven because of their **purification**, based on the **atoning death** of Jesus. The worship of God in the Heavenly Sanctuary goes on uninterruptedly eternally:

... And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7\* the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. 8\* And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 9\* And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, 11 "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created... [Rv 4].

The Righteous will eventually become full participants in this unceasing worship:

... 8 "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9\* Behold, I will make those of the

synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie--behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. 11 I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12\* He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' [Rv 3]

b. Normal Worship in the **Temple of Jerusalem** involved the closing of the gates following the evening sacrifice – and the opening of the gates at the morning sacrifice:

... THUS says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days; but on the sabbath day it shall be opened and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2 The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from without, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. 3 The people of the land shall worship at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the sabbaths and on the new moons. 4 The burnt offering that the prince offers to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish... [Ezk 46]

Ac [26:7] uses a metaphor regarding worship day and night, or night and day [more in accord with how Creation happened, in Gen 1-2] – the 12 tribes worship **unceasingly**:

... "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, 7 to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! 8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? ... [Ac 26].

Occasionally this metaphor is used, often hyperbolically, or as the ideal – in connection with prayer and other forms of religious observance [cf. Jr 16:13; Pss 1:2; 88:1; Ne 1:6; Jdt 11:17; Lk 18:7; 1 Th 3:10; 1 Tm 5:5; 2 Tm 1:3].

c. The presence of a Temple in heaven is frequently mentioned in Revelation:

... 19\* Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail... [Rv 11].

... 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" 14\* Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head [a Transfiguration ???], and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15\* And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." 16 So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped... [Rv 14]

... \* After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, 6 and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, and their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever; 8\* and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended... [Rv 15].

... THEN\* I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."... 17\* The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" [Creation memorial???] 18\* And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake [Rv 16].

... THEN he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2\* through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life \* with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3\* There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; 4\* they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever... [Rv 22].

d. The Heavenly Temple is often mentioned in non-Biblical early literature – this Heavenly Temple seems to have been created before Paradise. The heavenly Tabernacle is the pattern for the earthly Tabernacle: [cf. Ex 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Ws 9:8; Heb 8:2; 9:11, f.]:

... 8 Thou hast given command to build a temple on thy holy mountain, and an altar in the city of thy habitation, a copy of the holy tent which thou didst prepare from the beginning. 9 With thee is wisdom, who knows thy works and was present when thou didst make the world, and who understand what is pleasing in thy sight and what is right according to thy commandments. 10 Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory send her, that she may be with me and toil, and that I may learn what is pleasing to thee... [Ws 9].

... NOW\* the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent \* which is set up not by man but by the Lord. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence

it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5\* They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." 6 But as it is, Christ \* has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second... [Heb 8]...

... 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, \* then through the greater and more perfect tent \* (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking \* not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption... [Heb 9].

e. The Lord's dwelling place and the Nuptial theme:

... 11\* And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. 13 I am the LORD your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect... [Lv 26].

... 24 "My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. 25 They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to my servant Jacob; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there for ever; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. 26\* I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless \* them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27\* My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore..." [Ezk 37].

When the emphasis is on the Tent, it means a kind of temporary dwelling place, during the entire Exodus journey. A second Greek word seems to emphasize more the dwelling place of the saints in heaven until the time of the eschatological fulfillment. When Exodus imagery is used it is possible to find some contrast with the Lord God's presence with Israel **represented by a cloud by day and the pillar of fire in the night** and His unmediated presence with His people. **Shekinah** seems to imply the accompanying presence of God in a cloud. For the **Feast of Tabernacles** it was required to **live in Tents to recall the 'olden days'**:

... 39"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. 40 And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice

before the LORD your God seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD seven days in the year; it is a statute for ever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. 42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, 43 that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." 44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD.... [Lv 23].

This use of **Booths** [not Tents!] was probably found later among the Canaanites in the 'Promised Land' and **projected back into their own desert experience history**. The Clouds of Glory implies the protection of God among them in their dangerous migration through the forbidding wilderness.

f. The interpretation in **Booths** to mean **divine protection** – it is well known that God's protection earlier in the **theological term Clouds of Glory** in which the desert generation is said to have dwelt. ON the other hand, some scholars interpret the reference to **Booths** as a conceptualization of a theological read of the Festival in which they are associated with God's presence in the desert. However, there is no proof of this view earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> century a.D.

**Rv 7: v. 16:** ... They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat...

This is from Is 49:10:

... 8\* Thus says the LORD:"In a time of favor I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; 9 saying to the prisoners, 'Come forth,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways, on all bare heights shall be their pasture; 10\* they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall smite them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. 11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be raised up. 12 Lo, these shall come from afar, and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." \* 13\* Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted... [Is 49].

**v. 17:** ... \* For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes... [Rv 7].

a. The unknown author has interrupted his reference to Is 49:10 to speak about the Lamb, which may be rooted in Ezk 34:23:

... 22 I will save my flock, they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23\* And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken...

There is a close relationship between this passage and **Rv 14:1-5**:

**... AND\* I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals; 2 and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, 4 and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to into into it. 5\* Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."**

b. The 144,000 follow the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, wherever He leads – this brings together the images of **discipleship** and **shepherd/sheep imagery** as in Jn 10:4. Rv. 7:17 reflects the use of a common ancient pastoral metaphor in which the relationship between leader and those under him – usually a **King and his people**. This is easily comparable to the **Shepherd and his Flock** – this imagery appears often in OT: [2 S 7:7; Is 44:28; Jr 3:15; 10:21; 25:34-36; Na 3:18].

c. The verb **to shepherd**, or **to guide, to help** while in 2:27; 12:5; 19:15, it means **to rule**. The metaphor for Paul in apocryphal literature, as a **Lamb**, in the wilderness looks about for the shepherd: it appears at first peculiar that it is a Lamb who plays the role of a Shepherd – yet, in Rv the Lamb is the Davidic Messiah, as Jesus is called a Shepherd several times in the NT [cf. Mt 15:24; 25:32; Mk 14:27; Lk 19:10; Jn 10:2, 11, 12, 14; **Heb 13:20; 1 P 2:25; 5:4**].

**... 20\* Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ... [Heb 13].**

**... 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. 24\* \* He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, \* that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. [1 P 2].**

**... SO I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. 2 Tend the flock of God that is your charge, \* not by constraint but willingly, \* not for shameful gain but eagerly, 3 not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory. 5\* Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." [1 P 5]**

d. This metaphor of the Shepherd feeding His sheep, on the mountains and in the plains, occupies a significant place in John [10: 2, 11, 12, 14, 16]. This fact has been used to argue for a close relationship between Jn and Rv. However, exegetes find a problem here: **Jn uses only the noun** and **Rv uses only the verb to shepherd**, and this leaves Jn close to the rest of the NT [cf. Heb 13:20, **the great shepherd; 1 P 2:25, the overseer [epi-scope] of your souls**]. IN the OT, God as

the Shepherd of Israel is an ancient metaphor [Gn 49:24; 48:15; Pss 23:1, 3; 68:7-10; 80: 1; Is 40:11; 49: 10; Jr 50: 19]. IN the NT, God is referred to as Shepher only in a single parable offered by Jesus [Lk 15:4-7; Mt 18:12-14] – and only in Ignatius of Antioch [Rm 9, 1]. In the Church, the Bishop is often compared to the Shepherd – Christians as the flock is a common NT image [ Mk 14:27; Ac 20:28; 1 P 5:2]

e. **The Shepherd will guide them to the Springs of life:** as is known this reflects Is 49:10 – these **springs of life** have a Hebrew equivalent, often rendered as **fountain of living water**. This image runs through Rv [21:6; 22:1, 17] - and perhaps the most striking common metaphor that Rv. Shares with Jn [4:14; 6:35; 7:17-18] – streams of flowing water.

f. **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes:** a clear allusion to Is 25:8 probably with roots in Jr 38:16 This is found again in Rv. 21:4 - inspiring a sense of the **eschatological elimination of sorrow and pain**. The Festival of Booths demanded a week of joy – as does the Liturgy, the **3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent [Gaudete Sunday] – and the 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent [Laetare Sunday]**.

### Reflections

This whole section responds to the question of how the **Servants of God [7:3]** will survive the catastrophes unleashed by the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal. Jn 7, accomplishes two things:

[1] **vv. 1-8**: the effect of the plagues on Christians will be held at bay, while 12, 000 from each of the 12 Tribes are **sealed on the foreheads by the signet ring of the Living God**. This **sealing** symbolizes ownership and protection. The number of the *sealed* is mentioned, but the **act of sealing** is not. The reference seems to be to a group of Christians specially owned and protected by God – they will survive the tribulation and the awesome eschatological conflict with which this culminates: ***lead us not into temptation, defend us in the Battle! – deliver us from evil!*** The NT '**sealed**' will be immune from the plagues as was Israel of old in the plagues of ancient Exodus [Ex 8:22; 9:4-7, 26; 10:23].

[2] **vv. 9-17**: there are two units here, focusing on the **eschatological heavenly worship of God**:

- **vv. 9-12**: the **Great Hymn of Salvation sung to God** by the multitudes and is matched by the **antiphonal response sung by the angels surround the throne, the 24 Elders, and the 4 Cherubim**.

- **13-17**: this second section consists of an **explanation volunteered by one of the Elders** who interprets the foregoing scene. The multitude [v. 9] suggests the **fulfillment** of the Promise to Abraham, consists of the large number of **Christians suffering martyrdom** during the period of **eschatological tribulation**.



## II. STREAMS OF SALVATION<sup>99</sup>

On the last day, the great day of the Festival, Jesus stood and cried out: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me! Let anyone who believes in Me come and drink!' As Scripture says: 'From His heart shall flow streams of living Water. He was speaking of the Spirit ... [Jn 7: 47, ff.]

### Presentation

[1] **Liturgy of Water**: there are many archeological and liturgical texts that might be remembered. They all shed light on the ancient theme of **the Liturgy of Water** – a deep part of the ancient Liturgical contemplation in the heart of the Church. The **sign of the living water flowing from the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ** on Calvary proved unforgettable from a variety of perspectives:

**Sixtus III [ 432-440]**: he had the baptistery in the Lateran set up and these words engraved:

**May the reborn in this Font hope in the Reign of Heaven – the happy life is not received by those born only once. This is the Font of Life which dilutes through the whole world, taking its source from the wound of Jesus Christ.'**

This venerable inscription has appeared anew as a possible Baptismal Canticle in the new ***Ordo of the Baptism of Infants***, 1969 nn. 102.245:

**Lord Jesus, from Your wounded side, flowed streams of cleansing water; the world was washed of all its sin, all life made new again! [The Rites II, p. 340].**

**The Procession of Easter Vespers, 750, Rome**: on leaving the Baptistry of the Lateran the antiphon was sung:

**I saw the water flowing out from the Temple, alleluiah, and all will be saved and will sing, alleluiah!**

The new **Roman Missal of 1970**, proposes the same antiphon as a Baptismal Canticle which concludes the renewal of the Baptismal Promises, foreseen at the Easter Vigil. It should be noted that the 4<sup>th</sup> Evangelist documents the remaining 'sign' of the open side even in the Risen Christ.

**Rabanus Maurus, Abbot of Fulda [+ 856], 9<sup>th</sup> Century**: lists among his names for the Holy Spirit, the Living Font:

**O Living Font, who are also called the Paraclete, The Gift of the Most High God - Living Fount, Fire, Charity, and Spiritual Anointing!**

---

<sup>99</sup> Alfredo CARMINATI, SCJ, *E' venuto nell'Acqua e nel Sangue. Riflessione biblico-patristico*. Bologna: EDB 1978, pp. 57-87, *passim*.



**The Roman Missal, revised by Decree of Vatican II:** cf/ the Preface for the Solemnity of the Most sacred Heart of Jesus, re-proposes to us this 'liturgical' contemplation of the open side of Jesus Christ:

**In wondrous charity, You are the One raised up on the Cross, Who handed Himself over for us, and poured forth Blood and Water from the Pierced Side, from which flow the sacraments of the Church so that all attracted to the open Heart of the Savior, they will constantly be drawn from the fountains of salvation in joy.**

**J.M. Hanssens, *Institutiones liturgicae de ritibus orientalibus*. Tomus III [Pont. Univ. Greg. Rome: 1932]:** the student can easily see how the '**Liturgical Contemplation of the Piercing of the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ**' is present also in the Liturgies of the Eastern Church in these special instances: in the Byzantine Ritual, there is the insertion of a kind of lance into the Bread [n. 782]; and at the moment of the pouring of the water into the wine, for the Byzantine ritual [n. 1112], the Maronite Ritual [n. 784], the Chaldean [n. 785]; and the Slav [n. 793]. The Council of Trent recalls this particular to mind in the Mass affirms that in this there is recalled to mind the 'Sacrament of the Transfixion':

The Holy Synod then admonishes priests that it has been prescribed by the Church to mix water with the wine to be offered in the chalice [can. 9], not only because the belief is that Christ the Lord did so, but also because there came from His side water together with blood [Jn 19:34], since by this mixture the sacrament is recalled. And since in the Apocalypse of the blessed John the peoples are called waters [Ap 17:1, 15], the union of the Faithful People with Christ, their Head, is represented. [DS 1748 (945)].



**[2] Johannine Catechesis:** this second premise might be helpful – to scholars, it seems as though the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel gave some privilege to the theme of water in various chapters:

**Jn 2: Cana of Galilee:** in this episode, the water becomes the **good wine** of Jesus Christ [Jn 2:10], His **Paschal Gift** to those invited to the Nuptial Banquet. The entire passage shows evidence of it being in the **Passover** time [cf. Jn 2:11, 13, 23]. This episode is a sign, an announcement, of another wine [cf. Jn 6:14, 27; 9:16, 39; 11:26, 47], which will be the joy and the rejoicing of the **Messianic Banquet** set up by the Heavenly Father, for the **Nuptials of His Royal Son** [cf. Mt 22:2;; Jn 3:29; k 2: 19; Ap 19: 7; 21:2, 9].

This is reminiscent of the **Water of Rephidim** flowed miraculously out of the **Rock** became a 'sign' of the **salvific presence of the Lord God** in the midst of His Chosen People [**Ex 17:7**]. This also prophesies **the Eucharistic drink** that would flow centuries later [**1 Co 10:1-4, 6-7, 14:22**]. The **Water of Cana** that becomes wine, serves also as the 'Sign' of the presence of the savior and prophecy of the **Eucharistic Chalice**.

**Jn 3: Baptismal Catechesis**: this is the dialogue of Jesus with **Nicodemus**. Here the water becomes **the sign of the re-generating Holy Spirit** [Jn 3:5], the **sacrament of a new life**, different from that which can see the light of day through **the flesh alone** [cf. Jn 3:6] – or one **nourished by the flesh** [Jn 6:63]. This is the **sacrament of a new Pentecost**, which gathers **the scattered tribes of God's people into the One Body of the Lord**. This is a Body where all are equal, no more slave or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile [cf. Ga 3:28] – we are renewed in the Blood of the Lord [cf. 1 Cp 12:13; Jn1:33q; Mk1:8; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Ac 1:5; 11:16].

**Jn 4: Catechesis on the Holy Spirit**: and this includes also the **deputation on the authentic worship**. Here the **Living Water** becomes the symbol of the unique **Gift of God**. This enables us to pray as the genuine Children of God [cf. Jn 4:23-24; Ga 4:6; Rm 8:26-27; St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Romanos 7.2].

**June 5, Catechesis 1 - on Jesus' Identity**: the setting is the pagan sanctuary of Bethesda, a city that grew up around a therapeutic well [cf. Jn 5:4: most probably we have here an Orthodox transcription of the pagan credence in the '**Healing gods**' of the Syro-Phoenician persuasion. This, then, became the 'sign' of the authentic **Temple of God** which Ezk [cf. 47, 8, ff.] had foreseen with its healing waters **gorging outward from the right side of the Temple in the desert**. **Jesus is the One Who raises up the dead** and makes them live again [cf. Jn 21] unto that **eternal life that had been promised** [cf. Jn 5:24, f.]

Jesus, in fact, at the healing of the sick person [Jn 5:6, 9] – the poor man suffering paralysis for 38 years – wished to incorporate also the **resurrection** [cf. Jn 5:8, 21] **into a new life freed from the paralysis of sin**. [Jn 5: 14]. This **total re-healing** of the paralyzed man is precisely the task reserved for the Servant of the Lord, promised in Is 53:5] – **by His wounds, all of ours will be healed, physical and moral**. He will **draw all men and women to Himself** when He has been **raised up**: also on that **new emblem of the Cross**. Jesus is indeed the Healer [cf. Jn 3:14, f.], fulfilling the old story of merely **looking on the Bronze Serpent raised up in the desert** [Nb 21: 7-9; Ws 16:6-12], healing all who had been stung mortally. This is the authentic **Paschal Salvation** [cf. ex 12: 13, 23, 27; 15:26], Jesus instituted the **Sacramental Way** also in the **anointing of the Infirm**.

**Jn 7: Catechesis 2 on the Identity of Jesus**: some see this as a continuation of the preceding [cf. Jn 7:21, 23]. Here the **Living Water** is the Gift of Jesus Christ to the Faithful believing in Him, thirsting for Him. [cf. Jn 7:37-39]. These verses will be studied further on.

**Jn 9: Baptismal Catechesis on the Light, Illumination [PHOTISMOS] that can only come from the Faith** [cf. of the direct assistance of the Lord God Himself [Is 8:6] Jn 9 **the Waters of Siloa**, meaning one who is **sent** [cf. v. 7] – already the symbol of the assistance of the Lord God Himself [Is 8:6] These waters announce by their very name, the **Envoy, the One sent** by God Who makes of them all **the sacrament of the Light** for the eyes of the body and of the spirit [Jn 9:35-39].

**Jn 13:1-17:** in the Catechesis on the Diaconality of the Church [Jn 13:1-17], washing the Apostles' Feet, the water needed for this announces the necessity of Baptism in order to have part with Jesus [Jn 13:8 b] in the Eucharist.

†††

**[3] St. John: Important Texts:** after this rapid panoramic view on the role of **Water** in the Johannine catechesis there would be no surprise at the attention now needed to be dedicated above all to two texts in which Jesus speaks of the **Gift of Living Water** :

10 \* Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." 11 (The woman) said to him, "Sir, \* you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; 14 but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [Jn 4:10-14]

37 \* On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water \* will flow from within him.'" 39 He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, \* because Jesus had not yet been glorified. [Jn 7: 37-39]

†††

### A. The Gift of Living Water

**Presentation:** it is possible to presume that the **Water** which pours forth from the Pierced Side of the Redeemer [cf. Jn 19:34] is indeed for Jn a particular **sign**, and maybe even the most loaded with mystery and of salvation, and should indeed be identified with the **streams of living water** which will **flow from deep within the Messiah**.

### [I] The Samaritan Woman

1. Following these premises the hypothesis can be advanced according to which Jesus Christ had indeed made the first **veiled allusion to His own piercing**, understandable, of course, only after the Passion narrative. This prediction may have indeed been alluded to near Jacob's Well, to the Samaritan woman He suggested to her the possibility that she could find **in Him** the authentic **Living Water** [Jn 4:10] **truly capable to slaking the thirst of men and women and of becoming for them**

the Source of living, fresh water, bubbling from within Him for a way of life different from what she had been living, one that gushed forth into everlasting life [4:14], that life in the Holy Spirit.

2. Any tie between the relative tests of the Living Water [Jn 4:10 & 7:38] with the piercing of the side of Jesus Christ, was noted long ago by **St. Cyprian of Carthage** [+258]:

‘...In a like manner, once again, there is prophesied in anticipation and it is predicted that the Jews, if they became thirsty, they will look for Jesus Christ – they will slake their thirst among us, and they will obtain the Grace of Baptism: if they indeed are thirsty this will lead them through the desert places, and water will be drawn from the Rock for them. The stone will be broken open and there will flow forth the water, and My People will drink [cf. Is 48:21].

‘ And how much is realized in the Gospel when Christ Who is this Rock, is pierced during His Passion, by a thrust of the lance: keeping in mind what had been predicted beforehand by the Prophet and cries out: ***If anyone is thirsty, let him come and drink anyone who believes in Me. As Scripture says, Streams of living water will flow from His breast*** [Jn 7:37-39].

‘And so that it can become more clear that the Lord is not speaking of the Chalice, but of Baptism, the Scripture adds as follows: ***And He said this of the Spirit Whom they would receive who believed in Him...***

Through Baptism, in fact, there is received the Holy Spirit, and so, as Baptized who have received the Holy Spirit, ***one comes to drink the Chalice of the Lord...*** Elsewhere, too, the Lord speaking to the Samaritan woman, says to her: ***Whoever will drink of this water that I will give him, will not thirst again for all eternity*** [Jn 4:13, 14].

So, with these words there is signified the same Baptism of saving Water, which is received just once, and it is not repeated. While in the Church there is always a thirst for the Chalice of the Lord and this may be partaken of ...

## [II] The Feast of Tabernacles

1. A fairly good number of scholars, today, deny that there is any thematic identity between Jn 4:10 and Jn 7:38. However, other excellent exegetes who were responsible for the translation and the Notes for the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel in the **Jerusalem Bible**, in commenting upon Jn 4:14, affirm that the water flows through the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. These scholars cite as their texts: Jn 7:37-39; 7:17 & 22:17, the very last words of the Bible:

**15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16\* They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall**

not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17\* For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” [Rv 7:15, ff.]

17\* The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let him who hears say, “Come.” And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price. [Rv. 22:17]

b. **The JB Note Jn 4a: ‘ Meetings at a well** are a feature of the **Patriarchal narratives** [cf. Gn 25:10, ff.; 29:1, ff.; Ex 2:15, ff.] – and springs play a significant part in the life and religion of the **Patriarchal and Exodus periods** [ cf. Gn 26:14-22; Ex 15:22-27; 17:1-7].

In the OT spring water symbolizes **the life that God** gives, especially that of the **Messianic Age** [cf. Ps 36:8, f.; 46:4; Is 13:3-4; 55:1; Jr 2:13; Ezk 47:1, ff.; Zc 14:8 – and in the NT: Rv 7:16, f.; 22:17].

It also symbolizes **the life** imparted by **Divine Wisdom** and by the **Law** [cf. Pr 13:14; Si 15:3; 24:23-29;

This symbolism is carried further in the gospel narrative, **living** [i.e. a spring that flow] **water signifies the Holy Spirit** [1:33, ff.; 7:37-39].

c. Also in the **Ecumenical Translation of the Bible** [Paris 1972] in the commentary in the notes for JN 4:14 [‘p’] it is stated that the Evangelist is thinking of the **Gift of the Holy Spirit**, and as the third parallel we have Jn 7:38-39].

2. The citation of the two texts together, understood as **concerning the Holy Spirit**, might also be found in **LG 4**: the Holy Spirit was sent on the Day of Pentecost – He is the Spirit of Life, or the Fountain of flowing water unto eternal life... [cf. Jn 4:14; 7:38-39]. ‘It is through Him that the Father vivifies human beings, dead in sin so that their mortal bodies might rise up in Jesus Christ.’

3. **Jesus took up the theme of the Living Water**: this is found in His encounter with the Samaritan woman. This was in Jerusalem, on the Festival of Tabernacles, **the last and greatest day of the festival**. During the official celebrations some priests would descend to draw water from **the pool of Siloe**, in order to provide libations from it at the **Altar of the Holocausts** in the Temple. With this ritual, prayer was offered to God for **the gift of the autumn rains** after the long drought and the burning summer.

a. Commenting on this Festival Jesus remarks: **If anyone is thirsty let him come to Me, and let him who believes in Me, drink!** [Jn 7:37, f.]. For emphasis then that already from the planning stages for the Messiah, the Father had the idea of providing **a Source for the authentic Living Water**.

b. As further conviction for His witnesses, Jesus refers to God's Word: **As Scripture says: Streams of living water will flow from within Him!** [cf. Jn 7:38].

4. With these words **two problems** immediately emerge: to which text of the OT is reference being made? - from where do these streams of living water flow? From Christ – or, from the Faithful who believe in Him? To respond to these questions there are excellent studies which help us <sup>100</sup>. On the basis of these and other studies we can ponder these problems by stating that Christ alludes principally to three passages of the scriptures noted here:

... He brought me back to the entrance of the Temple, where a stream flowed eastwards from under the Temple threshold, for the Temple faced east. The water flowed from under the right side of the Temple, south of the altar He took me out by the north gate and led me right round outside as far as the outer gate where the water flowed from out on the right side ... Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live... [Ezk 47:1, 2, 9].

...When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to wash sin and impurity away... [Zc 13:1]

...when that Day comes, living waters will issue from Jerusalem, half towards the eastern sea, half towards the western sea; they will flow summer and winter. Then the Lord God will become king of the whole world When that Day comes, the lord God will be the One and only and His Name the one Name ... [Zc 14:8, f.]<sup>101</sup>

5. The opinion of Boismard is worthy of attention here: he believes that he has found in Ps 18:16 the biblical text which explains in Jesus' citation the key expression:

*15 He cleft rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. 16 He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers. [Ps 78] .*

a. His is a deep language study with an Aramaic word meaning **internal cavity, bosom**. It often happens that this term in Palestinian Aramaic assumes a complimentary function in phrases like the following:

- entrance into a place [e.g., having entered into];
- presence already in a place;
- exit from a place.

b. This phraseology then would be united to prepositions that would mean: **toward, in, into, out from**. The biblical text cited by Jesus in Jn 7: 38 would be the Aramaic translation of Ps 78:16 tailored for this specific purpose right

<sup>100</sup> M. Costa, Simbolismo battesimale in Gv 7:37-39; 19:31-37; 3:5', in: RB, vol. XIII 1965, pp. 355-359; R. Schnackenburg, *Il vangelo di Giovanni*, Part II.

<sup>101</sup> It seems that this last text was utilized by the Liturgy for the Feast of Tabernacles [cf Jn 7:38, TOB. Cf. also A. Gilding, *The 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel and Jewish Worship*. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1960. Other biblical texts utilized in the **Liturgy of Water** might also have been Is 12: 3[*Haurietis Aquas*] – also **Is 44:3, f.**, which contains the key of interpretation for **Living Water**: ... **For I shall pour out water on thirsty soil and streams on the dry ground. I shall pour out My spirit on your descendants, My blessing on your offspring, and they will spring up among the grass like willows on the banks of a stream** ...

here by Jesus Himself, while in life He was actually citing from memory the verse of Scripture: And he drew fluent waters from the bosom of the rock, and what a flow of running waters did this prove to be! [translation in Latin of Ps 78:16]. The Aramaic expression would be the same as in Italian: **He drew the water from within the Rock**.

†††

## B. Moses' Striking of the Rock in the Desert and Jesus Christ

Here we take up the second question always on the foundation of excellent scholars who went before us.<sup>102</sup>

1. The so-called **Ephesian Translation**, also known as the **Syro-African** rendition, authorizes us to affirm that the streams of Living Water flow from within Christ:

**St. Justine [+ 165]**: embraced the faith at Ephesus, and wrote:

... 'We have believed through the wash basin of our re-vision and knowledge of God, the wash basin intervened as Isaiah proclaims for the sin of the Peoples of God. And we attest that the same baptism predicted by Him, the only reality that can purify these re-visions, is the **water of life**. Baptism does not flow out of a man, as Jr notes: **12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD, 13 for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water** [Jr 2]. It is 'grace' which proceeds from God Who is the source of the living waters. Justin pondered this prediction of Isaiah: ... **16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil**, [Is 1]

**Sources of Living Water flowing** forth from God, this Christ poured forth over the earth of the gentiles, deserted from all knowledge of God; He has appeared also in the midst of your race ... The hearts of Christians are thus circumcised by wickedness, by evil, and come to rejoice in dying for the name of the celebrated Rock, which pouring forth living water into the hearts of those who by means of Him come to love the Father of all, and Who gives to drink all those who **desire the water of life** ... As the Scripture calls Christ 'Israel', and 'Jacob' [cf. Is 42:1, LXX] so too are we extracted from the side of Christ as from the Rock, and so we are the authentic Israelitic tribe...

**The Churches of Lyone and Vienne** in report sent to the Churches of Asia and of Phrygia on their own martyrs [from the persecution of 177. Under Marcus Aurelius], someone wrote of the martyr **Sanktos, Deacon of Vienne**:

<sup>102</sup> H Rahner, 'Flumina de ventre Christi, BIBLICA 1941, pp. 269, ff.; 367, ff.; , pp. 523, ff.; Coseta, pp. 348-355]. BOISMARD

‘... The members of his body burned but he remained inflexible and would not give in, being sustained in Confession, bathed by the dew and fortified by the Heavenly Font of the **Water of Life**, flowing from the bosom of Jesus Christ... ‘

**Irenaeus [+ 200] Disciple of Polycarp [Ep 264] wrote in this spirit:**

‘... Wherever the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every grace: and the Spirit is Truth. Therefore, those who are not participants, neither can they nourish themselves from the bosom of their Mother in order to live, nor do they attain to the most abundant font which flows forth from the Body of Christ, , but rather they strive to dig cisterns that are all broken down, and they drink water from earthly ditches, fetid water from the slime of the earth, by fleeing the faith of the Church in order not to be under accusation, and by refusing the Spirit in order not to be instructed.

‘The Logos is the Head of the Church; but in all of us there is the Spirit and He is the **Living Water** which the Lord offers to those who believe in Him with rectitude.

**Hyppolitus [+ towards 235]:** Disciple of Irenaeus, writes in this vein:

‘... in the **Garden of Eden there flows a river of inexhaustible water.** The four streams that derive from this and they irrigate the entire earth . The very same happens in the Church: **Jesus Christ, Who is the River, is announced in the entire world through the four gospels.** He irrigates the whole world and sanctifies all those who believe in Him, according to the word of the Prophet: Streams flow from His Body...!

**An anonymous writer [around 240] stated:**

Struck in the chest, on its side, by a lance, **there poured forth copious amounts of blood mixed with water, with which the holy Church was constructed** in which there was [as in Sion there was proclaimed the Law of Sinai, cf. Is 2:3] - consecrated the Law of His Passion , saying Himself: ***Whoever is thirsty, let him come and drink, who believes in Me, as it is written, streams of living water will flow from His breast!***

**Origen [+ 254]:** prolific Early Church writer, noted:

‘... It should not seem strange that if Christ, as He is the Source and Streams of living water that proceed from Him, and as **He is the Bread and gives life,** so **He is also nard and sends out a perfume,** He is also **balm and those who are united with Him will become christs.**’

‘Whoever is **thirsty for God** that he says: Has My soul been thirsting for the living God? Who has had such **thirst for the bosom of the Rock?** And that Rock was Jesus Christ! Who has had such thirst for the Holy



Spirit as to say: As the doe **yearns for the living streams**...! If we do not have such thirst of these three sources of the waters we will not find any source of water ... And those who venerate one sole God, but disdain the prophecies, such as these are not thirsting for the Holy Spirit Who was indeed in these Prophets. Therefore, such as these do not drink from the paternal font, nor from the One Who in the Temple cried out and said: ***If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to Me and drink!*** Therefore, ***the bosom of the Rock never runs dry***, but such as those above have already abandoned the font of the **"water of life. It has never been that the Fountain of life has abandoned them!"**

**St. Cyprian [+ 258]** depends on Justice and on Irenaeus, wrote about 256 these words:

'... The Lord cries out that whoever is thirsty should come to Him and drink from the streams of living water which will flow from His breast!

**After 256, an Anonymous Writer**, an adversary of St. Cyprian, noted:

'... *Whoever is thirsty let him come and drink as Scripture says: Streams of living water flowed from His breast. These streams appeared for the first time in the Lord's Passion, from Whose side, pierced with a lance of a soldier, blood and water flowed forth...*

**St. Aphraates [+ after 345]**: he was bishop somewhere in Persia, and writing in 344 stated:

'... For them, **Moses drew water out from the Rock**; for us, our Savior has made living waters flow from His own bosom...!

**Julius Firmicus Maternus, around 350, wrote:**

'... There is another food, that brings salvation and life... Seek the bread of Christ, the Chalice of Christ, so that having neglected the fragile pottery, the substance of man might be nourished with an immortal nourishment. But, just what is this bread or this chalice? So that it might be said more openly who ever could be that Bread, through which there was defeated the perdition of a wretched death, the Lord Himself indicates it with a holy and venerable mouth, so that the hopes of men might not be deluded by divergent discussions and by aberrant interpretations. It is read, in fact, in the Gospel of Jn: ***I am the Bread of Life; whoever will come to Me will no longer be hungry; and whoever will believe in Me will no longer be thirsty.*** Likewise, further ahead He announces the same thing in the same manner; He says, in fact: ***If anyone is thirsty, let Him who believes in Me, come and drink ...!***

**St. Gregory, Bishop of Elvira, near Granada, [+ after 370] noted:**

'... When in the desert the people suffered the trial of thirst, it was then that Moses struck the Rock with his staff, that is, with the wood, and there

immediately gushed forth springs of water: with this, there was announced that the Sacrament of Baptism was instituted [ or, brought about]. The fact that that stone indeed was the figure of Jesus Christ the Blessed Apostles proves this when he proclaims: And the Rock was Christ. There is simply no doubt that that Rock was the figure of the Lord's flesh: and this flesh, struck by the wood of the Cross, gives off Living Water to all who are thirsty, as it is written: Streams will flow from His bosom ...

'Therefore, those waters drawn from the Rock already then announced by a typical pre-figuration the streams pouring forth from the bosom of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism, and gushing forth from the side of Christ of salvific drink for the thirsty.

Who could there be, in fact, who does not know that our Lord Who is the Source of Living Water gushing unto eternity of life, suspended on the wood of the Cross, has poured forth from the wound of His side – not only Blood, but also abundant Waters ? All of this was to announce that His Spouse, the Church, is made from His side in the likeness of our first parents – as also Eve was made with Adam's rib, she was made therefore, of two Baptisms, of Water and of Blood through which in the Church are made both the faithful and the Martyrs.

'It was necessary that the Holy Spirit should arrive before the Man vested by the Word of God and so by means of Him should overflow also to us, as though from the Source of Virtue, the distribution of the grace of the same Holy Spirit... The entire fullness of the Holy Spirit came on Christ precisely because He is the complete [integrum] body of the whole Church. Upon us, though, who are destined to be His members, there have been distributed singular gifts of the charisms of the Holy Spirit, so that as some will receive a particular measure of grace, the goods of the same Spirit might reach us as from the Font of Christ, Font of the Gifts and of works ...

#### **Mario Vittorino, African [+ towards 380]:**

... If there is anyone who is thirsty, let him come and drink whoever has faith in Me! As Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within Him ... These streams indeed are the Holy Spirit, the womb from which the streams flow is Jesus; Jesus in fact is the Spirit. And, therefore, Jesus is the womb from which flow the streams of the Holy Spirit. As in fact, the Son is from the womb and in the Womb, bosom of the father, and so the Holy Spirit is from the womb of the Son. The Three are therefore of the same Nature, in all Three, there is only one God!

#### **St. Ambrose [+ 397]: Bishop of Mila wrote:**

'... It is not only water by which the Holy Spirit is called, but also *streams, rivers*, according to what has been read: ***streams of living water will flow from His bosom.*** And this was said of the Holy Spirit ... Therefore,

**the Holy Spirit is indeed a River**, a very great River which according to Hebrews poured forth from the interiority of Jesus, as through the mouth of Isaiah it was prophesized [Is 66: 12], and He has been handed over to us...

**‘ ... Drink Christ because He is the Rock who gushed forth water’ Drink Christ, because He is the Font of Life; drink Christ, because He is the impetuous River who makes the City of God rejoice; drink Christ because He is Peace; drink Christ because the Streams of living water will flow from within Him...!**

‘...Whoever is blessed will be the imitator of the Lord Jesus, who is the Wood of Life ... this tree could not dry up because it had living within it the richness of spiritual grace. Then, **full of the Holy Spirit Jesus distanced Himself from the Jordan** [Lk 4:1]. These are the courses of living water of which it is spoken in the Gospel: ***Streams of living water will flow from within Him...!***

‘... Then He said: I am thirsty! It was then, therefore, that He was thirsty when streams of living waters poured forth from His sacred side destined to extinguish the fire of the thirst of all. And therefore, it is written: ***Streams of Living Water will pour forth from within Him!***

**St. Epiphanius of Salamina [+ 403] Bishop of Constance in Cyprus writes:**

He Himself, therefore, the Holy Word, the authentic Son, WH is always with the Father, and proceeds from the Father, Wisdom from Wisdom, the Font from the Font... perennial Stream which with impetuous waves rejoices the City of God proceeding from the Source,, and this is why the Scriptures say: **Streams will flow from His breast ...**

**Rufinus [+ 411], Priest, expresses himself this way:**

... It is written that Jesus, struck in the side, has poured forth water together with His Blood. This is without doubt mysterious. He, in fact, had said that ***streams of living water will proceed from His bosom...***It might also be retained that this fact had announced in figure, **the two-fold grace of Baptism of Water, and that other which is acquired through martyrdom with the outpouring of His Blood...**

**Jerome [+ 419] wrote:**

...The Rock was struck and the waters poured forth. It is that Rock Who says: *Whoever is thirsty, let him come and drink; from whose side will flow streams of living water* ... the Lord, Whom Paul affirms was struck for our sins, emitted for us inexhaustible streams... But, the Rock of the desert alluded also to the **Font of Baptism and of martyrdom** projected for

us. From His side, in fact, when it has been struck, there flowed out blood and water, and that was the figure of both Baptism and Martyrdom ...

**An Anonymous Writer of the 5<sup>th</sup> century writes:**

...The Lord in the Gospel attests in a most clear manner to that principle of the Jews according to which **no one indeed can be saved without bathing in that spiritual bath, or to come into possession of His Reign**; He says, in fact: If one is not born anew in the Water and the Holy Spirit, this person will not see the Realm of God. But, of this He had already spoken of in anticipation by means of Isaiah: ***Behold, I will do a new thing; I will make a highway in the desert and streams in dry places, in order to give my Chosen People a drink*** ... [Is 43:19, f.]. And once again: ***If they are thirsty crossing the desert, this will draw for them water from the stone; the Rock will be cracked open and there will flow water and my people will drink*** ... [Is 48:21] ***And for the third time: Streams of living water will flow from His side*** ... [Jn 7:38].

**St. Caesarius Arelat. [+ 542], Bishop of Arles, writes:**

... The Lord, therefore, said to Moses: ... ***take your staff and strike the Rock, so that water might pour forth for the People...!*** It is a Rock, and yet it contains water! But, if this Rock will not be struck, would not give forth water; yet, once it has been struck, it emits streams and rivers as we read in the Gospel: ... ***Whoever believes in Me, streams of living water will pour forth from Him.*** In fact, once He has been struck, Jesus Christ on the Cross emits the streams of the NT: it was therefore necessary that He might indeed be struck; if, in fact, He had not been struck, then from His sacred side there would not have poured forth blood and water, the whole world would have fallen into ruin **tormented by its thirst for the Word of God** ...

**St. Isidore [+ 636], Bishop of Seville, wrote:**

... Concerning that water which flows from His side, another Prophet says this: ... ***Streams of living water will flow out of His bosom***, i.e., the waters of Baptism which will **give life to believers and these waters will be given to the thirsty...!**

**Pius XII, in his *Haurietis Aquas* [1956] wrote:**

... To those who heard Jesus speak when He promised that a fountain of living water would burst forth from His bosom, it surely was not difficult to connect these words to the affirmations of the sacred prophets who proclaimed the Messianic Reign, as **Is 12:3; Ezk 47:1-12; Zc 13:1** - also to that **typical Rock** from which, once it had been **struck by Moses**, burst open in water in a marvelous manner [cf. **Ex 17:1-7; Nb 20:7-13; 1 Co 10:4; Rv 7:17; 22:1**]...

## CONCLUSION

After this presentation of Patristic testimonies, some modern scholars have deduced that the Biblical text intended by Jesus in Jn 7:38, is really a Targum of Ps 78:16, and have found much agreement. Commenting on Jn 7:38, many sources make explicit reference to the **Rock struck by Moses**: Justine, Origen, Cyprian, Afraates, Gregory of Elvira, Ambrose, Jerome, and the Anonymous author of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and Caesarius of Arles.

The fact, then, that **the biblical text cited by Jesus signals as the Source of the Living Water, Christ Himself and not the believer**, is the persuasion of the following Church Fathers: Justin, the Churches of Lyon and Vienne, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, the Anonymous writer of 240, Origen, Cyprian, an Anonymous writer of 256, Aphraates, Gregory of Elvira, Mario Vittorino, Ambrose, Epiphanius of Salamina, Rufinus, Jerome, an Anonymous writer of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Isidore of Seville...

Lastly the following noticed the tie between Jn 7:38, and the piercing of Jesus Christ: the Anonymous writer of 240, Cyprian, another Anonymous writer of 256, Gregory of Elvira, Ambrose, Rufinus, Jerome, Caesarius of Arles, Isidore of Seville ...

†††

### C. The Theological Transcription of the Symbolic Expression, *Living Water*

1. It is now time to take under reflection the Post-Pentecostal Theological Contemplation of Jn 7:39 on the solemn proclamation of Jesus Christ and on **the Scripture cited by Him on the occasion of the Solemn Ritual of Water for the Feast of Tabernacles**.

a. The theological transcription of Christ's symbolic language - in Jn 7:38, the Discourse is on the **Living Water** was not entrusted to scholars, but rather was handled by an apostle with that fuller comprehension. The Apostles did enjoy unique insights as they were taught both by the actual words of Jesus and as eye witnesses of the glorious events of His Life. They further immensely and **uniquely benefitted by the special light of the Holy Spirit of Truth** bestowed upon them [DV 19]. It might be recalled to mind here how Vatican II, among its texts, loaded with **Post-Pentecostal reflection of the Apostles** explicitly mentions Jn 7:39.

b. This is Jn's annotation: ***And He said this alluding to the Spirit Whom those would have received who believe in Him. Then, in fact, the Spirit was not yet in them Because Jesus had not yet been glorified*** [cf. Jn 7:39].

c. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit of Christ is therefore bound to His glorification [cf. also Jn 16:7; 20:22; Ac 2:33]. This remark of Jn, at first sight might seem at first sight as not pertinent to our scope of reading correctly the sign of the piercing of Jesus Christ.

2. However, it should be noted that for the 4<sup>th</sup> Evangelist the **glorification** of Jesus has already begun in His exaltation on the Cross:

- *When you will have raised up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am!* [Jn 8:28] He will be present to us much like a source flowing out for us [cf. Ex 3:24].

- *And I when I will be raised up from earth, I will draw all to Me!* [cf. Jn 12:32] - He will be the vessel, the sign, raised up for the nations and to gather the dispersed of Judah from the 4 corners of the earth [cf. Is 11:12]

- *Like Moses raised up the bronze serpent in the desert, so it is necessary that the Son of Man be raised up, so that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life!* [Jn 3:14]. These will have **their thirst slaked in the healing waters flowing forth from the opened side** [cf. Ezk 47:8-9, 12]. This will be done later from the opened side of God's Envoy [cf. Jn 9:7; cf. Is 8:6], that all who are thirsty might receive the Holy Spirit, that **medicine** thought up by God which bring health with it, as we pray in the Sequence of Pentecost. **This healing medicine will be applied to the venom of sin and against death eternal** [Rm 8:2, 11]. And thus down through the long centuries the Church will proclaim that the **Crucified is the True and authentic Sacrament of the Lord God and that He is the Healer** [cf. Mk 2:17; Jn 5].

3. This verb **to raise up** has been chosen by Jn as the most suitable to express also the idea of **glorification** [cf. Is 52:13; Si 43:30, Ac 2: 33; 3:13]. Furthermore this would seem all the more transparent from those texts indicated in which the **raising up** of Christ on the Cross becomes the Epiphany of His presence in Salvation History, an explosion of His power that is both attracting, drawing – and vivifying.

4. Thus, in Ac 2: 33, the Exaltation of Jesus expressed with the verb is intimately connected with the task entrusted to Him by the Father of **pouring out** the Holy Spirit : *Exalted to the right hand of God and received by the Father the Holy Spirit promised to us, He has poured Him forth and you see Him and hear Him.*

5. Jn **anticipates** the glorification of the Lord to the moment of His Passion and Death: it is **the raising up of Jesus on the Cross and in the opening of His side** that Jn sees the glorious exaltation of the Lord and the explosion of Pentecost over the world.

6. Therefore, whoever keeps in mind that for the 4<sup>th</sup> Evangelist, **the Hour of the Cross is precisely the Hour of His Glory** [Jn 12:23-24; 17:1; Heb 2: 10; Heb 5:9].

The **piercing of Jesus** presents itself to him **in that Pentecostal light** in which the Apostle himself has contemplated it and the biblical text cited by Jesus on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles [Jn 7:38] becomes most luminous for him: **the Water which bursts forth from His pierced side is the Sign of the Holy Spirit that He pours out over His Church, represented at the foot of the Cross by Mary and John the Apostle: The Streams of living water will flow forth from His bosom. And He said this alluding to the Spirit which those would receive who**

***believe in Him. Therefore, in fact, the Holy Spirit had not yet come to them, because Jesus had not yet been glorified ... ! [Jn 7:38, f.].***

7. The echo of the Johannine annotation [Jn 7:39] to the biblical text cited by Jesus [Jn 7:38], has been heard also in the witness left by Irenaeus, Origen, Cyprian, Mario Vittorino, Ambrose and many others.

a. The fact that Jn's hint to the **glorification** of Jesus calls us to the foot of the Cross and not before the empty tomb. St. John Chrysostom [+ 407] made this comment in his work on Providence : The Disciple who has written these things [i.e., ***Father, the Hour has come, glorify your Son!*** – Jn 17:1] spoke thus: ***The Holy Spirit was not yet in them because Jesus had not yet been glorified***, is the glory the Cross!

b. By convoking us to the foot of the Cross in order to assist at the breaking open of the Rock, **the 4<sup>th</sup> Evangelist calls us to live the Pentecostal moment proper to his writings.** There should be noted the **Pentecostal character of the Piercing of Jesus** this was already noted early on by many of the Fathers of the Church. It has been emphasized on many occasions, even up to recent times by the Magisterium of the Church: **From the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross there has flowed forth the marvelous sacrament of the entire Church** [SC 5].

8. Jn invites us to assist at **the breaking open of the Streams of Water foreseen** by **Ezk [47:1-12]** and by **Zc [13:1; 14:8, f.]**: Jesus Christ in fact is the authentic **TEMPLE-SOURCE** depicted in Ezk's desert vision [cf. **Jn 2:21**]. He is in fact, God's Envoy, of Whom Zc speaks, pierced by His own People and having become **the sparkling Fountain** for the House of David in which **impurity and sins are washed** [cf. Jn 19:37].

9. This **purifying and re-generating, re-invigorating Pentecost** [cf. **Ezk 36:25.ff**] has suddenly exploded onto the world in the solemn silence of Christ's death: ***One of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and there immediately flowed out blood and water!*** [Jn 19: 34]. That is, Jesus Himself has sent out **His Spirit onto the Church under the sign of Water**, bursting forth from His pierced side: **the Holy Spirit in fact is the Living Font, He is the Fountain of flowing water unto eternal life.** And His Blood and the Water flowing from the opened side of the Crucified Jesus signify the **beginning** and the **growth** of the Church.

10. Under the astonished eyes of Mary and John there is realized an ancient plan of God delineated in the **OT figure of the Rock that was Struck by Moses** and which has become **the font of living water for the People on their Way toward the Mountain of God: for this Rock indeed was Jesus Christ!** [cf. 1 Co 10:4].

a. Mary and John in fact find themselves in the presence of one of those grandiose and splendid interventions of God in Salvation History which led David to exclaim: ***What other\* nation on earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name, and doing for them\* great and***

*terrible things, by driving out\* before his people a nation and its gods? \*...? [ 2 S 7:23].*

b. Mary and John are before a divine prodigy which gives fullness of meaning to those signs of exodus long ago [cf. Ex 17:1, ff.]:

*All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people found fault with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you find fault with me? Why do you put the LORD to the proof?" 3\* But the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. p7 And he called the name of the place Massah\* and Meribah,\* because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel, and because they put the LORD to the proof by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"*

11. It is to be noted that the kerygmatic presentation of Jesus Christ as the **Spiritual Rock** from which flows forth a fresh Spiritual Drink which is for those who are living through their own spiritual exodus, their own Pasch towards the eternal Covenant fulfilled weith God – all such participants exercise a **priestly belonging to Him**.

a. These ideas precede by very much the Johannine writings and even the Synoptics. One of the earliest testimonies we do have may be found in 1 Co 10:4, which some scholars maintain that Paul wrote in the spring-time of the year 57 in Ephesus.

b. In that same Letter, speaking of the communion existing within the Early Church, he explains the cause in the fact that the thirst all of us is to be **slaked** with one and the same Spirit. While communicating all this to us in the most varied charismatic forms, which are assimilated **to the most diverse services of the members of this Ecclesial Body**, the Holy Spirit does not provoke and tensions or disharmonies within the ecclesiastical fabric.

c. Rather, this unifying Spirit renders us all complementary one to the other in the One Body into which the most varied personalities and gifts have been integrated through Baptism [1 Co 12:11, f.]. The terminology that is used by the Apostle shows that the kerygmatic presentation of the Holy Spirit as a **spiritual drink** of the Baptized was present in the Apostolic preaching already prior to the composition of the Gospels.



d. The presentation of the opened side of Jesus Christ as the Baptismal Font from Whom is born the entire Church is not, therefore, poetic writing, or inegesis, of little value, of some mystic in contemplation. Rather, **this symbolism is present in the apostolic kerygma itself**. This can be confirmed already by Tertullian, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, , Jerome, , Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria ... This early **faith** was deeply carved, sculpted, into the Lateran Baptistry by Pope Sixtus III, and was re-proposed as we have seen by the new ***Ordo of Baptism of Infants*** [n. 245].

†††

## D. The Paschal Action of the Holy Spirit

1. From what concerns the Holy Spirit, the Latin side of the Church is sometimes criticized for having an impoverished , one that is lacking and spotty. Hence, the effort goes on to be sure to 'include' the Holy Spirit into our themes, such as the **Pasch**, in all its components, or models, such as: **Liberation, Exodus, Covenant, Priestly Acquisition, New Life**, and the like.

2. It is not difficult to grasp the full depths of the **Johannine Pentecost** of which mention has been made here. The Holy Spirit served as Christ's support in the temptations and trials of His life [cf. Lk 4:1-2]: as the Son of God, Jesus has always been sinless and also impeccable – and in His humanity, He has always been solely at the disposition of the Holy Spirit His death to sin [cf. Rm 6:10] certainly was not in any sense a deliverance, liberation from any domination of the Evil One.

a. This was rather totally an act of praise for His exclusive availability to the Holy Spirit. This has put an end to any dominion of the Prince of this World and his domination [cf. Jn 12:13]. The reason for this being that Jesus reacted with a dignified silence and the words of Truth, with meekness and patience, with words of pardon and hope [Lk 23:46] to the violent temptation as part and parcel of His trial of condemnation unto death [Heb 2:18]. In the attention of His adversary, Satan [Jn 13:27], his role was to exasperate Christ and put Him at odds with His Father [cf. Jb 1:6-2:10; Ws 2:12-20].

b. The Father seems eerily 'absent' ,silent, in the drama that overtakes His Most Beloved Son [cf. Mk 15:34]. However, in the Plan of God [cf. Jn 10: 18] all this served to bring out the more the loving obedience of the Only Begotten Son [cf. Heb 2:10; 5:8, f.] and to shed some light on His absolute fidelity to His Father [Jn 14:30, f.].

3. The Holy Spirit served as the support of Jesus Christ in His absolute unavailability to sin that He celebrated in fullness at the moment of His death, by bringing out the ore His **immaculate oblation of Himself** to God through His own personal **priestly belonging** to the Father [Heb 9: 14]: Inspired by the eternal Spirit of God, He offered His immaculate Self to God! [TOB, note 'q'].

4. In the gift of the Holy Spirit signified by the Water pouring forth from His Pierced Side, Jesus chose to leave to us the secret of His success, and chose to

enable us, empower, capacitate us, to live His **Pasch**, as the mystery of Liberation [cf. Ac 2:24; Heb 9:12; Rv 12:5] – this makes our **Exodus** possible [Lk 9:31] – this is our enrollment in His **Covenant of Mercy** [cf. Mt 26:28; Jn 15:10] – this is the source of our **priestly belonging** to the Father [Heb 9:14]. This is our being generated into the **New Life** for Him [cf. Rm 6:10].

**5.** In fact, it is indeed His Holy Spirit Who works out in us our **liberation** from the poisonous bite of sin and death [Rm 8:2, 11] - this **washes** us, **sanctifies** us, **renders us just** [cf. 1 Co 6:11] – **anoints** us for the day of our deliverance [cf. Ep1:13, ff.; 4:30; cf. Ex 12:13, 22 f.; Ezk 9: 4, ff. Rv 7:3, ff.].

**a.** It is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit [Mk 1:8; Mt 3:11; Jn 1:33] that opens us for us our **Exodus journey** [cf. 1 Co 10:2; Ga 3:27] - this enables us to live anew the departure of the Israelites from the land of slavery [cf. Ex 14:13] as well as that of Jesus Christ from His home in Nazareth [Mk 1:9]. This is in order to **pass over** to the more committed **service** of God, to the ever more willing listening to His Word [cf. Ex 24:7; Mt 4:4, 7, 10].

**b.** This calls us to live Christ's personal adventure in the following of the Holy Spirit into the desert [cf. Mk 1:12, ff.; Mt 4:1; Lk 4:1] – it is like that of the man born blind and is called to the following of the **Light of the World** [cf. Jn 9: 5, 35-39; cf. Ex 13:21]. This leads to the share of the **Drink of the Holy Spirit** [cf. 1 Co 12:13]. Baptism enables the believer to **re-live the experience of the Israelites to that Rock on Horeb** when they touched with their hand the 'presence' of the Lord in their midst [cf. Ex 17:6, f.].

**c.** It is in the Holy Spirit that we come to share the **New Covenant** of which Paul states that he serves as its **Deacon**. This is in the glory of a service rendered to the Holy Spirit which **vivifies** [2 Co 3:6, 8]. The ministers of the New Covenant are enabled, capacitated by God to write on the hearts of flesh not so much with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God [2 Co 3:3], made executors of the promise of God [Jr 31:31-33; Ezk 36:25-27].

**d.** The Diaconate of the Holy Spirit [cf. 2 Co 3:8], proper of NT ministers, actualizes for every believer, the culminating phase of the Exodus, the convocation to listen to the Word of God on Sinai [cf. 2 Co 3:3] – confers on each the **anointing** [cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27], which penetrates deep within under the action of the Holy Spirit [Jn 14: 26; 16:13; cf. Jr 31:34].

**6.** It is the Holy Spirit Who is the **Pledge** for the ransom of us all acquired for the praise of God [cf. Ep 1:4] - it is the Holy Spirit dwelling within us that renders us His - - we become of Christ [Rm 8:9] – it is the Holy Spirit given to us as a **pledge** [cf. 2 Co 1:21-22] Who acquires us by an **anointing unto God** as **Priests, Kings and Prophets** [cf. Lv 8:12; 1 S 16:13; 1 K 19:16], for **Worship**, for our royal **freedom**, for **evangelization**.

7. God made two promises on Sinai:

- **You will be for Me my own special treasure distinct from all peoples!**
- **You will be for Me a reign of priests and a holy nation!**

a. These promises [cf. Ex 19: 5,f.] are fulfilled in the **anointing** impressed on the Believer who then becomes the **personal property, special treasure** of God Himself. These are the specially loved of God, and in their **anointing** they become **consecrated** as priests, prophets and kings in the heart of the New People of God. The Apostle, St. Peter, cites explicitly this text of Exodus [cf. 1 P 2:9] when he recalls to his readers that they are **to be built up** on Jesus Christ as a priestly community in order to render a worship pleasing to God [cf. 1 P 2:5].

b. Now, it is the Holy Spirit indwelling in us that transforms us into His Temples for the Glory of God [cf. 1 Co 6:19, f.], and renders us genuine **adorers** of the Father [cf. Jn 4: 23, f.]. There cries out deep within us the authentic prayer of genuine Children of the Father [cf. Ga 4:6; Rm 8:15, f.; 8:26, f.].

c. This is our **incipient priesthood** destined for a choral growth even to the measure of the fullness of Jesus Christ [cf. Ep 4:13]. Each of us is called to **celebrate the grand liturgy of Christ's fidelity to the Father,** in abnegation, required of that royal freedom, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit [cf. Lk 4:1, 8; Rm 8: 13, 14; Ga 5:16, 22, 23].

d. However, the **anointing of the Holy Spirit** arouses in the world, in addition to a royal priesthood, also a people whom God has acquired so that this Faithful assembly which is the Church might announce the deeds of He Who from the darkness has called His own into His own marvelous light [1 P 2:9].

8. There is here a composite citation: and that is, to the text of Ex 19:6, St. Peter adds the final : [...**the People that are acquired for Me will narrate My praise!**]. This is a 'D' text relative to II<sup>nd</sup> Exodus, the Return from Exile: ***They will glorify Me the wild beasts because I will have given them water in the desert, streams in the wasteland, my Chosen People - this is the People that I have formed for Myself, which will sing My praises!...*** [cf. Is 43:20, f.].

9. The **spiritual drink** of the Holy Spirit in Christian Baptism [ 1 Co 12:13] was prefigured also by these **waters** of the II<sup>nd</sup> Exodus, capable of acquiring Israel for God, as the Prophet called to narrate His Deeds. The calling to mind of the text of II-Is facilitated for St. Peter the tasks of reminding all the Baptized to their **Prophetic Vocation** and of committing them to **announcing** the deeds of the One Who from the darkness has called them into His own marvelous Light This is why **the Lord has acquired a Prophetic, Priestly, Royal People for Himself!**

## Conclusion

Lastly, it is always the Holy Spirit Who enables, capacitates us in this **New Life** of Covenant Partners, Priests, Kings and Prophets of God [cf. Rm 7:6; 2 Co 3:8, f.; 1 Jn 4:13; Ezk 36:25-28], demanded of our belonging to Jesus Christ [1 Co 7:22, f.].

†††††

## III. THE SYMBOL OF BLOOD & WATER <sup>103</sup>

### Presentation

[1] From the earliest years of Christian antiquity Jn's verse [19:34] of the Pierced Side of Jesus, 'from which flowed blood and water', has always inspired profound resonances in the tradition: at the beginning this was echoed in the Fathers of the Church, and then even more specially in the theology and the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus in the middle Ages. And this has even reached to the modern period.

[2] Our scope here is biblical theology – and scholars have succeeded in placing better in light the foundations also of the Devotion to the **Sacred Heart** of Jesus and to **Christ the King** [along with the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ!]. This can be achieved by a thorough contemplation on Jn 19:34.

[3] As an introductory salvo, an effort will be made to bring out more clearly, that upon which an analysis of this nature might be more objectively based.

[a] There will be called to mind the more important interpretations that have been given to this passage, in the three great periods of the tradition: the Fathers, the Middle Ages and the Modern times.

[b] The careful student will thus be able to note better how the exegesis that we are proposing is situated on the prolongation of those which have been proposed up to the present, particularly in the Middle Ages, which has been particularly rich in this regard. This will open the door also to new clarifications. These have been due to a more attentive examination of the multiple co-relationships that exist between the verse under question and different other themes of Johannine theology suggested by the immediate context.

[4] In the second part there will indicated briefly the principal challenges that this one verse arouses for the modern exegete.

The third stage then will be that of the analysis of the text – in which there will be attempted a **theological interpretation**.

†

---

<sup>103</sup> IGNACE DE LA POTTERIE SJ, *Il mistero del Cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualita' de Cuore di Gesu'*. Studi Biblici. Bologna: EDB 1988, cap. V, pp. 89-120, *passim*.

## [I] Brief History

### A. The Patristic Exegesis

1. There are two outstanding testimonies from this period – one from the East and the other from the West. Following an English language specialist in this matter, he treats of the ‘mysteries hidden in the side of Christ’ for the tradition of the Syrian Church. He wrote: This single verse, Jn 19:34, can be considered as the focal point of the **Paradise of Genesis**, and looking ahead, toward the **New Paradise**, and the **sacramental life of the Church**. The typological associations of this single verse are of an incredible richness and our effort here will be simply to put in some order the immense tradition in its more salient points.<sup>104</sup>

2. This interpretation, as may be clear, is above all, **typological**: it seeks to illumine the sense of the verse indicating the correlations of its themes within the context of the History of Salvation. In the Western Church there is the same reality in St. Augustine: however, he adds a new element [the opening of the side] by which there is situated at the point of departure of **a mystical tradition**. When the proper moment would come there would come to flourish the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. [Hugo Rahner is without doubt the one theologian who has had the greatest influence on the History of **the Veneration of the wound in the sacred side of Jesus**].

a. *One of the soldiers opened up His side with his lance, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water.* The Evangelist has been very attentive to the choice of the verb used here. St. John did not say: ‘he struck’ – or, ‘he wounded’ the side, or anything like this. He wrote **opened**. It seems that he wanted to indicate here, so to speak, that the **door to new life had been opened up**, from whence would flow the **sacraments** of the Church, without which no one can enter into that life, which is the **true, new life**.

b. That Blood had been poured out for **the remission of sins**, that water is poured into the **Chalice of Salvation**, and it is at the same time **both drink and bath**. This mystery had been pre-announced by that **Door** which **Noah** was ordered to **open in the side of the Ark**, in order to have enter there those **living beings which had not perished in the flood**: with these, the Church was pre-figured.

**Summary:** From the symbolism of the sacraments, Augustine then passes over to that of the Church, the New Eve, who comes forth from the side of the **New Adam**, **sleeping** on the Cross. As is clear, there is undoubtedly a great text with sublime insight. But the impression also arises that there is being accumulated too much wealth here: in order to explain this verse from Jn Augustine has recourse on the one

---

<sup>104</sup> S.P. Brock, ‘The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ’, in: *Sobornost* [1978], 7.6, pp. 462-472. Id. *LA festa nuziale di sange sul Goltota, Un insolito aspetto di Gv 19:34 nella tradizione siriana*, in: *Sangue e antropologia. Rito e culto*, Roma 1987, II, pp. 971-984. Cf. also R. Murray, *The Lance which re-opened Paradise. A Mysterius reading in the Early Syriac Fathers*, in: *OrChrP* 39 [1973], pp. 224-234. 491; Id. *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*. Cambridge 1975, pp. 124-127.

hand, to a three-fold biblical typology; **Adam/First & Second; Eve/ Church; Noah's ark** – then, on the other hand, to a two-fold ecclesial prospective: the **birth of the Church herself**; and the **Sacraments necessary to join her**.



## B. **The Middle Ages, Monastic Spirituality**

1. In any case, the genuine devotion to **the wound in the sacred side of Jesus Christ** and to the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**, these would not come to light until the Middle Ages, especially in the **Monastic Spirituality** of St. Bernard, William of Saint-Thierry, and above all in the German mystical tradition. It would be necessary to note here some of the great names that emerge: the two Benedictines of Helfta, St. Matilde [+ 1298] & St. Gertrude, the Great [+ 1302].

2. The Jesuit, Fr. Charles Bernard, SJ <sup>105</sup> notes in the Middle Ages tradition another development saw the light of day, which leads to putting particular value on **a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**, and, as a result, **mystery of the love that the heart symbolizes**. To illustrate this Monastic theology, a text from William of St. Thierry emerges his **Meditative Prayers**, regarding the **open door**: in which there is easily perceived an echo of Augustine's interpretation: '... so that through **open door**, all of us are able to **enter even to your very Heart** of Jesus ... **even to Your most holy soul**...Open, o Lord, **the side door of Your Ark of the Covenant**, so that there might indeed **enter there all those who truly desire to contemplate the secrets of the Son, those who desire to receive the Sacraments** that flow out from there, that they might **ponder the price of their redemption**. There is a slight development anyway with Augustine's idea: **the gate to the true life becomes that which provides access to the Sacred Heart and the Holy Soul of Jesus Himself!**

a. There comes here to the forefront **the aspect of a personal experience**: the Heart of Jesus becomes **the point of departure of the interior movement of truly mystical love**. We see, for example, how St. Gertrude speaks of the Pierced Side in her **Message of Divine Piety**. For the Saint, the Heart of the human-divine Person of the Lord is **the source of His infinite love**. Furthermore, the Heart, **through the wound in His Sacred Side**, pours forth **like a living wave the Gift of the Holy Spirit**, Who descends into our souls to **establish** there between the Lord Himself and each recipient, **an authentic union and incorporation of love and mercy**.

b. She says to Christ: 'I have received the counsel of honoring with a constant devotion the love of Your Heart when You were suspended from the Cross, and of attaining to this Source of charity which has flow forth, under the impulse of an ineffable love, **the water of a genuine piety**.'

---

<sup>105</sup> *Le Coeur du Christ et ses smboles*. Paris 1981, pp. 55-59.

c. On the **Feast of Pentecost** she heard the words of Ac 1: 8: [ ... **You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you** ...] – and then she saw from the Heart of the Son of God there was flowing drops from a most pure vein: it was said of her that she came to understand that in this there was symbolized the sweetness of the **Spirit Paraclete**, Who through the Heart of the Divine Son poured into the heart of the Elect.’

**Summary:** We retain from these texts the insistence of St Gertrude on her **personal union with Jesus Christ**, on the **Heart of Christ** as **a Font of Divine Love**, but also as **a Font of the Holy Spirit**: these are three themes that we will find in the exegetical analysis of Jn 19:34.

### C. The Modern Era

1. The modern period peaked in the great Encyclical of 1956, ***Haurietis Aquas***, of Pope Pius XII.<sup>106</sup> This great letter synthesized so many of the elements already noted, particularly those of the Patristic period:

... From the Wounded Heart of our redeemer the Church was born, as the Dispensatrix of the Blood of Redemption and there also flowed from Him in **abundance the grace** of the **sacraments** from which the children of the Church attain supernatural life, as is read in the holy liturgy: **From the Pierced side the Church is born, the Spouse of Christ**... [n. 39].

2. And there is reference to the episode of Jn 19:34 - the sacred side of Christ **opened** by the thrust of the soldier's lance:

...And this is why **the wound of the Pierced Heart of Jesus** will remain in the course of the centuries **the living image of this love**, fully manifested, through which God has given His Only-Begotten Son in our to **ransom** back human beings. The **love with which Christ has loved us so strongly as to** immolate Himself for us on Calvary in His **Bloody Sacrifice** ... Christ has loved us and has given Himself for us, **by offering Himself to God in a sacrifice of sweet odor**... [Ep 5:2].

3. Despite the richness of this data from Tradition, there remains the fact that in our era, it is necessary to realize that there exists a certain allergy, hesitancy, toward the Devotion of the sacred Heart of Jesus.

a. Many authors have tried to find the reasons for this. The great Jesuit, **K. Rahner, SJ**, pointed out that the cult of the sacred Heart brought with it in an excessive manner, the signs of a day and age: the state of theology, of the spirituality and the language of the French 17<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, there is emphasized in this the fact that this theology, even in the recent attempts to renew the devotion, is a contraction **based on a relatively abstract reasoning process**: it departs from an image, a **symbol** of the Heart [or, rather from the **word** heart] in the

---

<sup>106</sup> cf. LG 3; SC 5 – CCC # 478

modern parlance, but above all in the Bible, and then its content is applied to the contemplation regarding the Heart of Christ. There is thus hoped to achieve the intimate center of the human – divine person of the Incarnate Word, opened up to His Father, and opened to all his brothers and sisters. And here the struggle is to illustrate all this by citing a series of texts from Scripture regarding His ‘sentiments’ of the love and mercy of Jesus Christ during His earthly sojourn.

**b. From our perspective**, we would like to point out that despite the appearances, this theology is not sufficiently concrete, and furthermore, it is not sufficiently based on Sacred Scripture. It is connected in an insufficient manner to that moment in which Christ was pierced while He hung on the Cross. Let us recall that after the Council, the Word of God has to serve as **the soul of all of theology [DV 24]**. The return to the sources is required today for **Mariology** and has also to be realized in **Christology**, and particularly for the theology of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**c.** Nonetheless, it is here that immediately there is felt a clash with a difficulty: if it is true, as we have seen, that the scene of the piercing of Christ's sacred side is that page of Sacred Scripture which assumes greater importance for the prayerful contemplation of theology and for the devotion for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a profound study of this passage is truly a prerequisite. But, while it is necessary to keep in mind that Jn specifically did not use the word **heart**. At first sight, therefore, one could hold that it seems rather arbitrary to base on this text an entire theology of the heart of Jesus Christ – at least, to clarify that the Blood and the Water of the Wound of the sacred Side should not be interpreted in this sense.

**d.** On the other hand, there is needed to keep in mind the biblical insistence on the **opening** of the Heart, with all the inherent poetry here and with all the symbolism that this reality implies and has aroused. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that this theme was noted as early as Augustine, and brilliantly so. And he based his contemplation on the imprecise Vulgate translation, that holds the word: *aperuit*. However, the Greek text, it must be kept in mind, states that the Roman soldier *struck* with his lance the sacred rib of Jesus. There are ancient Latin texts which more correctly have translated this Greek verb as: *percussit - perfodit - pupugit*.

**4.** Nonetheless, despite all these serious challenges, we still believe that this dramatic scene, so important to the Evangelist himself, that Jn 19:31-37, pondered in its context, has not yet been exactly and sufficiently studied from the literary and exegetical point of view, even though so many different works have been dedicated to it. These can be of great help in rediscovering and pondering more deeply the great intuitions of the tradition on the mystery of the Heart of Jesus Christ.

**a.** Following the mystical tradition of the middle Ages, without any doubt, it is no longer possible to renounce the theme of the **heart** of Jesus. Now, here, the return to the biblical sources places the committed believer before a curious paradox: at first sight, one might say the exegetical study arouses rather a difficulty, because of the total absence of the word **heart** in Jn 19:34.



b. However, studying this whole context one remains struck by noticing practically a certain equivalence by making a precise analysis of the context, above all with the study of the symbolism of **blood**. At this point, the believer might take up a reflection of the spirituality of St. Catherine of Siena, Doctress of the Church [1970]. In her writings there is precisely the symbolism of the **blood** having a primordial importance - while that of the **heart** comes only in a later moment, in the mystical tradition noting **union with Jesus Christ**.

c. As far the newness of interpretation is concerned that we would like to suggest here in connection with the patristic exegesis, and the ecclesial or sacramental interpretation of this important verse, the immediate context invites us rather to contemplate this prior to all Christological interpretation: **the two-fold sign of the blood and water which flow out of the sacred side of Jesus Christ, only after His death**, illumine in a singular manner the mystery of that which even beforehand has its own profound life. Now it is precisely in this manner that these are of interest very directly for that which only later will be called the theology of the Heart of Christ. But it is time to show more in some detail that come to the fore from a deeper contemplation.



## [II] Problems & Challenges

### A. Exegetical

1. A perennial problem needs to be faced as this was formulated by R. Bultmann and his school: in the theology of Jn, the death of Jesus no longer has the sense that it had in **the early Christian tradition**.

a. In earlier times His death was interpreted as an Expiatory Sacrifice for our sins [cf. Rm 3:25; Ep 5:2; Heb 7:27]. In the Johannine writings, however, Jesus in His death is emphasized more as the revealer of His Father. As a consequence, Jn 19:34 and the other passages in which the Blood of Christ is mentioned [cf. Jn 6:54-56; 1 Jn 5:7], or of the Christ, the **Victim of expiation** for our sins [1 Jn 2:2; 4:10] – these texts must be considered as later interpolations, because the idea of **expiatory Sacrifice** is extraneous to the Johannine thought – according to the Bultman school of thought.

b. However, for us Catholics, this radical position is clearly unacceptable. However, it does contain an element of truth, which has not been sufficiently held in mind: it is beyond any doubt that the Johannine theology is fundamentally a **theology of revelation**, even during the Passion account. So, the real question is that of coming to know whether a **theology of revelation** is likewise a theology of sacrifice, or whether they would be opposed to each other.

c. At the basis of the Bultmann theory there is found an erroneous conception of sacrifice: this is a very important point and is of enormous actuality.

On the other hand, is Jesus on the Cross is indeed the **Revealer**, Bultmann does not **explain just what it is that He death reveals**: he refuses absolutely to indicate the object and the content of this revelation. Thus, **the Person of Jesus is emptied of His mystery**.

2. Just how are the Blood and Water interpreted by **contemporary commentators**? It is necessary to recognize this: compared with the proud ancient interpretations the balance here is rather a delusion for what pertains to the Blood.

a. **Various Modern Scholars:**

- The impression is conveyed of a certain bewilderment among the exegetes. **Fr. M.J. Lagrange, OP**, wrote nearly a century ago: it is not easy to define this symbol while the fathers propose certain explanations of it.

- According to **Raymond Brown**, water in Jn is often the symbol of the Holy Spirit – by contrast, the blood would not have any symbolic value. Blood that is shed always indicates simply that Jesus has died.

- **R. Schnackenburg** observes that the passage ought to be interpreted in the light of Jn 7:37-39 – however, in this, explicit mention is made only of the **living water** that flows from the bosom of Jesus. If one would like to distinguish further, the author suggests that one may think that the **blood is a sign of the salvific death of Jesus** [cf. 1 Jn 5:7]. The water remains **a symbol of the Holy Spirit and of new life**.

b. In our own times, there still is found the sacramental exegesis which was also current in the Patristic period: the Blood and Water symbolize **Baptism** and the **Eucharist**. In the **JB, Jn 19:34** +, we read: The significance of the incident is brought out by two texts of scripture [cf. vv, 36, ff.]. The Blood shows that **the Lamb has been sacrificed truly for the salvation of the world** [6:51]; the water, **symbol of the Spirit**, shows that **the sacrifice is a rich source of grace**. Many of the Fathers interpret the water and blood as **symbols of Baptism and Eucharist** and these two sacraments as signifying the **Church**, which is born **like a Second Eve from the side of another Adam** [cf. Ep 5:23-32].

c. However, the inverse order of the words, blood and water, is a serious difficulty against this interpretation – this would require rather that we should read **water and blood**. This might be handled by seeing Jn 19 as an emphasis on the **blood sacrifice** – where as 1 Jn 5:5-8, is more of a ‘pastoral’ approach, regarding how through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **Baptism** and **Eucharist** are administered in this order: *...Jesus it is Who came by water and Blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but with water and blood, and it is the Spirit that bears witness, for the Spirit is Truth. So, there are three witnesses: the Spirit, water and Blood, and the three of them coincide...*

d. Further, there are still some other authors strive to be even more precise regarding the symbolism of the Blood. There was a classical study by a

German, J. Heer - for whom the blood applies an expiatory value to the death of Jesus. For Fr. de la Potterie, SJ, it seems imprudent to introduce immediately here those ritual categories which are [for him] extraneous to the immediate context. It has also been proposed to see in **the Blood from the Pierced Side** as an allusion to the to the **Paschal Lamb**. Regarding **the Blood of the Paschal Lamb** [remembering, of course, that the the 4th Gospel is the **Paschal Gospel**] there has been developed, beyond all doubt, a most sublime Christian typology –Fr. de la Potterie, however, sees this going in another direction: the **sign of the Blood** [cf. ex 12:7, 13] has never been referred to the blood from the side of Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 19:34]. There is rather more attention paid, it seems, to the action of the Israelites in Egypt at the moment of the Exodus. The anointed their door posts of their Tents in order to avoid the massacre of the desert demons. This gesture was interpreted by the Fathers as an anointing - and this would have prefigured the **Baptismal Anointing** conferred at the Paschal Vigil. In this sense, some would see that the **sign of the Blood** which saved the Hebrews in their Desert Tents served as the figure of the **Sign of the Cross** traced on the foreheads of the neophytes during the baptismal consignation.

e. The reference is secure for the fact that the legs of **Jesus, the sacrificial victim** are not broken. Yet for Fr. de la Potterie all this does not seem fitting for the Blood that flows from the sacred side, because the image, in the case of the Paschal Lamb, is totally different: according to ex 12:13 the Israelites had to partake of the Blood of the Lamb of place it as protection against the Exterminator. No reference is made here to the Blood that flows from the Lamb.

f. More satisfying for Fr. de la Potterie [!], even though the view is advanced without proof, is the interpretation proposed in the commentary in Spanish [Barreto-Mateos, 1982]. These commentators hold that the Blood that flows from the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ is the image of His Death which He freely accepts out of love and Mercy for the salvation of humanity ... blood is His **death accepted**. The interest for this view derives from the fact that this interpretation seeks to perceive the resonances of the verse in its immediate context, without recurring directly to the biblical typology or to the sacramental life of the Church: **the blood which flows from the sacred side of Jesus already dead is presented here as a symbol of that which was the totally free acceptance of death on the part of Jesus while He was still alive**. It is this line that Fr. de la Potterie finds his peace.



## B. Theological Challenges

1. On this point, we will strive to be brief because it is taking us somewhat far afield from our main themes. Nonetheless, we do have to say a word on a very delicate point: that of the **actual neglect** of the notion of **sacrifice**, above all after the publication of the works of R. Girard [Violence and the Sacred]. According to a contemporary, well known theologian, **we are profoundly allergic to the notion of expiatory sacrifice**: the doctrine of propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, appears to us

as unacceptable according to this author. Under the same title of Bultmann's theory, **this puts under discussion the whole notion of sacrifice** which is of interest to our present discussion. The reason being is that in one way or another **the mention of the Blood of Jesus in Jn 19:34 is bound to the theme of redemption.**

2. We will seek here to present in a few words the thought of R. Girard. His point of departure is his reading of the History of Religions. He notes that everywhere in the world, society is threatened with violence [let it be remembered, at the very beginning of human history, the eloquent example of fratricide, the murder of Cain]. In order to be liberated from this tension, human beings, moved by a recollection of antagonism, put into operation the contrived mechanism of the **Expiatory Victim, practicing a sacrifice**. This, too, of course, is violent but of another type. It is a sacral transfiguration, illusory, of a homicide, perpetrated in order to free oneself from 'impure violence' – society practices a **purifying violence**. Now, the great novelty brought to the world by **Christianity is that of being a non-sacrificial religion**: Jesus has broken the tight bond between violence and the sacred, announcing the universal law of love. **The death of Jesus is not to be seen as a sacrifice.**

3. **BUT**: the fundamental criticism that needs to be made against this outlandish view is that the author departs from a conception that he has discovered in the History of Religions – but, against this many reservations have been brought forward. He has applied this view uniquely to Christianity. In so doing, he does not seem to be sufficiently aware that already in the OT in Judaism, and then above all in the NT – in particular in the Letter to the Hebrews – **the notion of sacrifice has been profoundly re-worked and interiorized.** The fact that in the History of Christian Theology there have indeed been recorded very painful deviations and terrible strange and disheartening theories, this fact is undeniable. However, Girard cannot be excused from the fact of ignoring most profound explanations of the term 'sacrifice' provided by the great doctors, for example, St. Augustine and St. Thomas:

a. **A Classical Test of St. Thomas Aquinas:**

III, SUMMA THEOLOGICA

QUESTION 48: OF THE EFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S PASSION

ARTICLE 3: Whether Christ's Passion operated by way of **sacrifice**?

OBJ 1: It would seem that Christ's Passion did not operate by way of sacrifice. For the truth should correspond with the figure. **But human flesh was never offered up in the sacrifices of the Old Law**, which were figures of Christ: nay, such sacrifices were reputed as impious, according to Psalm 106:38: "And they shed innocent blood: the blood of their sons and of their daughters, which they sacrificed to the idols of Chanaan." It seems therefore that Christ's Passion cannot be called a sacrifice.

OBJ 2: Further, Augustine says (De Civitate Dei x) that **"a visible sacrifice is a sacrament - that is, a sacred sign - of an invisible sacrifice."** Now Christ's Passion is not a sign, but rather the thing signified by other signs. Therefore it seems that Christ's Passion is not a sacrifice.

OBJ 3: Further, whoever offers sacrifice performs some sacred rite, as the very word sacrifice shows. But those men who slew Christ did not perform any sacred act,

but rather wrought a great wrong. Therefore Christ's Passion was rather a malefice than a sacrifice.

On the contrary, The Apostle says (Ephesians 5:2): "He delivered Himself up for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness."

I answer that, **A sacrifice properly so called is something done for that honor which is properly due to God**, in order to appease Him: and hence it is that Augustine says (De Civitate Dei x): **"A true sacrifice is every good work done in order that we may cling to God in holy fellowship, yet referred to that consummation of happiness wherein we can be truly blessed."**

But, as is added in the same place, **"Christ offered Himself up for us in the Passion": and this voluntary enduring of the Passion was most acceptable to God, as coming from charity.** Therefore it is manifest that Christ's Passion was a true sacrifice. Moreover, as Augustine says farther on in the same book, "the primitive sacrifices of the holy Fathers were many and various signs of this true sacrifice, one being prefigured by many, in the same way as **a single concept of thought is expressed in many words, in order to commend it without tediousness**":

and, as Augustine observe, (De Trinitate iv), "since there are four things to be noted in every sacrifice - **to wit, to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, what is offered, and for whom it is offered** - that the same one true Mediator reconciling us with God through the peace-sacrifice might continue to be one with Him to whom He offered it, might be one with them for whom He offered it, and might Himself be the offerer and what He offered."

Reply OBJ 1: Although the truth answers to the figure in some respects, yet it does not in all, since the truth must go beyond the figure. Therefore the figure of this sacrifice, in which Christ's flesh is offered, was flesh right fittingly, not the flesh of men, but of animals, as denoting Christ's. And this is a most perfect sacrifice. First of all, since being flesh of human nature, it is fittingly offered for men, and is partaken of by them under the Sacrament. Secondly, because being passible and mortal, it was fit for immolation. Thirdly, because, being sinless, it had virtue to cleanse from sins. Fourthly, because, being the offerer's own flesh, it was acceptable to God on account of His charity in offering up His own flesh. Hence it is that Augustine says (De Trinitate iv): "What else could be so fittingly partaken of by men, or offered up for men, as human flesh? What else could be so appropriate for this immolation as mortal flesh? What else is there so clean for cleansing mortals as the flesh born in the womb without fleshly concupiscence, and coming from a virginal womb? What could be so favorably offered and accepted as the flesh of our sacrifice, which was made the body of our Priest?"

Reply OBJ 2: Augustine is speaking there of visible figurative sacrifices: and even Christ's Passion, although denoted by other figurative sacrifices, is yet a sign of something to be observed by us, according to 1 Peter 4:1: "Christ therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sins: that now he may live the rest of his time in the flesh, not after the desires of men, but according to the will of God."

Reply OBJ 3: Christ's Passion was indeed a malefice on His slayers' part; but on His own it was the sacrifice of one suffering out of charity. Hence it is Christ who is said to have offered this sacrifice, and not the executioners.

**b.** The fundamental principle is provided by St. Augustine: **a visible sacrifice is he sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice.** Already by Philo of Alexandria the principle is clear: every visible offertory, every sacrifice that is offered

following the rites of the Law is nothing other than **the symbol of an invisible offertory of the human soul.**

c. And it is in employing such sacrosanct principles and premises from the Judaic-Christian tradition that we need in order to seek out whether the Death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was truly a **sacrifice** as has been revealed repeatedly. These same principles will assist us to comprehend better the symbolic value and the deepest meaning of the shedding of Christ's Blood on the Cross.

†††

### 3. **The Symbolic Value and Theological Interpretation of the Blood & Water**

Here, we will proceed in three stages:

- [I] Initially, we will note certain aspects of the **literary structure** of the passage;
- [II] Then, we will bring into the light the **symbolic value** of the terms blood and water;
- [III] Thus, there will be manifested **the profound theological bearing** of the expression.

#### [I] **The Co-relation of the Themes in the Structure of Jn 19:28-37**

1. This is not the place to take up a detailed examination of the literary structure of this passage. So, we will limit ourselves to bring out a few essential points commenting on the structured text that is found below. We will strive to emphasize above all that there is a tight unity between these two passages: **Jn 19: 28-30 & Jn 19: 31-37**, i.e., between the death of Jesus and the episode involving the roman soldiers. The two-fold comportment contrasting those [the fact of not breaking Jesus' legs, the blow of the lance] have evidently **a symbolic value**: there is indicated **the salvific meaning of Jesus' death**. There is thus discovered an intimate connection between **vv 28, 20 & 34**. Also the I Thirst in v. 28 is to be grasped in **the spiritual sense**: **His thirst expresses the dying Jesus' desire of sending out His Holy Spirit on the Church**.

There is also stated here this way in order to realize, that along with His death [***He handed over His Spirit...***] – a certain schema emerges:

---

**The symbolism of the Blood and Water** In Jn 19:34:  
connection of themes in the structure of **Jn 19:28-37**:

---

| <b>v. 28</b>  | <b>v. 30</b>   | <b>v. 34</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| [narrative text – reality<br><b>symbolized</b> ]  | [narrative text - reality [symbolic language]<br><b>symbolized</b> ] | <b>symbol</b>   |
| <i>After this, as all<br/>Was now complete,<br/><b>J.C.</b> so that the Scrip-<br/>ture might be ful-<br/>filled.</i> | <i>Jesus said: 'It is<br/>finished.</i>                              | <i>he pierced Him and<br/>Immediately blood<br/>...</i> |
| <b>JESUS</b>  | <b>JOHN</b>  | <b>CHURCH</b>   |
| <b>H.Sp.</b> <i>I am<br/>Thirsty</i>  | <i>He lowered His Head &amp;<br/>gave up His <u>Spirit</u></i>       | <i>...and <u>water</u> poured<br/>forth....</i>         |

*He gave up His Spirit ...He communicated His Spirit!*

---

2. On the other hand, we know from the two episodes of **the Samaritan Woman [Jn 4:10-14]** and the proclamation of Jesus in the temple, on the last and greatest day of the **Festival of Tabernacles [Jn 7:37-39]** - these are two passages in which there is also present the mention of **Thirst** - that the **Living Water** that would **flow from the Sacred Side of Christ is a symbol of Holy Spirit**. This is precisely that which Jn sees fulfilled in v. 34, when **the water flows from** the pierced side of Jesus. From the point of view of the structure we see therefore there being delineated a thematic continuity between vv. 28.30.34\: **the thirst** of Jesus while He was still alive, **the Gift of the Spirit** the living water **as the permanent symbol** of this Gift after His physical death.

3. These initial statements invite us to an analysis of the same type for the word **Blood** in v. 34: also here there is discovered a co-relationship of this verse with the same vv. 28 & 30 which precede. In this path backward from v. 34 to v. 28, we meet above all the expression: **It is finished [completed]!** – from v. 30 which is **Jesus' Last Word prior to His death**. However, this same word had already been anticipated by the Evangelist, who had reinforced it with the word **all**: **all is completed [finished]!**

4. We thus obtain **among the three texts thematic parallels**: one presents directly the **Christological** aspect, regarding the **death** of Jesus, and this is bound to the symbol of the **Blood** – **all is finished, completed!**

The next theme is in the lower part of the schema, and this develops the **Pneumatological theme** and this is expressed by the **Water**: **I am thirsty, and He handed over His Spirit!**

The first finds its point of arrival in v. 34 – and yet the mention of the Blood after the **death** of Jesus, is **directed backward** in the text toward that which happened while Jesus was still alive. The other line, on the contrary, begins with the **thirst** of v. 28 – by the very fact of being a **desire** of the **dying Jesus**, His Thirst of the Gift of the Holy Spirit is **orientated ahead** toward that which will be necessary for the **life of the Church**.

5. The totality of these **thematic co-relationships** among the vv. 28.30. 34 has a decisive importance for the interpretation of the Blood and water, which flow from the sacred side of Jesus. We must still, however, show the general symbolic bearing of the two terms.



## B. The **Symbolic Value** of the Blood and Water

1. We will not spend time on the problem of the historicity of these, verses, and even less on the physiological explanation of this abundant flow of blood and water: in recent times, with developments in the exegetical and medical fields, these were a but the only aspects of the problem that interested certain commentators. There is no convincing reason yet alleged sufficient to deny the historicity of this revealed fact. However, it is clear that for **Jn**, this fact acquires such importance only by reason of **his deep symbolic interest**. Furthermore, there is a kind of general rule: the reality of the events is the underlying condition for Jn's abiding interest in symbolism. Long ago, St. Maximus, the Confessor, noted in a profound and suggestive comment: **with the Incarnation, the Lord becomes the proper type and symbol**, and symbolically He indicates Himself through Himself. Through Himself, **in so far as He was visible, He leads all creation toward Himself in so far as He remains so unfathomably hidden**.

2. In the present case, the symbolic bearing of the Blood and water is directly suggested on v. 35, by the three-fold insistence of the Disciple on his testimony. Now in Jn, the witness is not only the one who attests to the Truth of a fact: from the fact that he has indeed seen the events, he passes then over to that which cannot be seen. **The visible is the sign of the invisible**. The affirmation of faith of the witness is directed toward this hidden reality. So, for example, for **John the Baptist at the Jordan**: he sees the Dove, another symbol of the Holy Spirit, who **remains** on Jesus. Through this sign he understands that Jesus is the **Chosen of God** [cf. Jn 1:32, f.], and of this he gives testimony. The same happens on the Cross: the **Beloved Disciple** sees that from the pierced side there flows blood and water – and he forcefully testifies, not so much about this material fact taken in itself, but of that symbolized of that which he himself has comprehended in his **look of faith – looking on the One Crucified**. Furthermore, his testimony ought in its turn to arouse the faith of all Christians: **so that you too might believe!** [19:35]. This Faith is described again at the end: **They will look on the One they have pierced!** [v. 37]. It is necessary therefore to conclude that on v. 34 the words Blood and Water belong to the symbolic language of the Evangelist. If the event which he recounts has here a capital importance the symbol represents its deeper meaning.



3. The question arises: how can one clarify the symbolizing value of the Blood and the Water? Let us begin with the **water** which is the easier of the two to explain because of its biblical references and its explanations furnished by the Evangelist himself. Everything indicates the **water** is here a **symbol of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit**. In Jn 7:38, Jesus had announced that the streams of **living water** would have poured out from His sacred Side. And according to the comment of the Evangelist, **Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit whom they ought to receive who had believed in Him** [7:39]. The passage from Scripture to which he most likely referred is **Ezk 47:1**, taken up again in **Zc 14:8**: Ezk speaks of a stream of water that flows out of the desert temple in order to germinate life everywhere. Zc describes the **living waters** that **flow out of Jerusalem**. In Jn 19:34, the Evangelist also states that the **water flows out of the pierced sacred side**: Jesus is for him **the Eschatological Temple** from which gushes the **living water of salvation**. This was already the sublime exegesis of Hippolytus: Through the Blood we receive the Water of the Holy Spirit. This is perfectly in accord with the expression: **He gave up His Spirit** found in Jn in v. 30, with which our present verse is paired.

4. A question arises: just what symbolic value must, then, be attributed to the **Blood** which flows from the sacred side of Jesus? Here it is necessary to open up with a fundamental biblical data: **blood is the seat of life!** [cf. Lv 17:11, 14]. But, blood that is **shed is the sign of death**.

a. Therefore, it would not be necessary to conclude too quickly that the symbolism of the blood has an ambivalent character, involving both life and death. It is more than fitting to distinguish here between **sign** and **symbol**: **the blood that flows from the pierced sacred side of Jesus Christ is simply the sign of the material fact that His death has already happened** [cf. v. 30].

b. However, since blood is also a **symbol**, it is necessarily **a symbol of life**. This is what has been suggested by the entire context of the Johannine account here. The English exegete, Westcott, has found the precise formula: **The Blood of Christ represents the Life of Christ**. The blood which **flows** from the pierced sacred side of Jesus already dead **becomes** for the witnesses on Calvary the evocation and the **symbol** of the profound life of Jesus before His death. It is the **visible sign** of that which has remained **invisible**: the **conscience of Jesus**.

b. The blood which flows from His Pierced Side permits us, therefore, to penetrate into His intimate life, mind and heart - in all that the spirituality, beginning in the Middle Ages, will refer to as **the Heart of Jesus**:

**CCC # 478** Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: "The Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>116</sup> **He has loved 487 us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 368 pierced by our sins and for our salvation,<sup>117</sup> "is quite rightly 2669 considered the chief sign and symbol of that. . . love with which 766 the divine Redeemer**

**continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception.**<sup>118</sup>

c. Consequently, at this point, it is possible to bestow anew all its value to a theme that: certainly not only from the Latin rendition here – *latus eius aperuit* - which is not from St. John's original but because of the verb, **there flowed forth**. This second verb orientates in an equivalent manner the intention of the Faithful toward that which was **within, in His interior**, and also because of the symbolism of the **blood** which calls to mind that which was **the profound interior life of Jesus Christ**.

d. On the other hand, there is confirmed from this all that we have unearthed a bit above from a reflection on the literary structure: the word **blood** of v. 34 directs us to what had been said on vv. 28 & 30 regarding Jesus **prior** to His death. This is the point now in which the Faithful believer is drawn to examine more fully the unearthed data.



### C. The **Christological Interpretation** of the Symbolism

After all this, we have finally arrived at the center of our contemplation on the Pierced Side of Jesus Christ. We need now to see out a deeper comprehension of the tradition concerning the symbolism of the blood and water strictly from the Christological point of view: **that of the mystery of the profound life of Jesus Christ**. This entire pericope of Jn on the body of the **dead** Jesus takes its deeper meaning from that which the **living** Jesus has revealed to us.

1. Let us begin here with that data indicated to us from the literary structure of the passage: the **Blood** that flows from the Sacred Side of Jesus Christ **after** His death [v. 34]: this is the **symbol** of the two-fold: ***It is consummated!*** [vv. 28 & 30] **prior** to His death. Here we see clearly as was indicated above in the structured text, that which is **symbolized** by the Blood of Jesus.

a. Therefore, these **two usages** of the one verb: ***consummatum est!*** – are not on the same level: in **v. 30**, and only there, it is a word of Jesus - it is His last word uttered prior to dying: it is found at the very center of the structure. With this word, Jesus expresses a judgment regarding the totality of His work, His entire earthly mission. But, in **v. 28** this word of Jesus had already been **anticipated** by the evangelist: in this context it was accompanied by a series of important details that provided a commentary of these, opening up thereby a broad horizon on the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus. These will now be further analyzed: ***... after this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, He said: I am thirsty... !*** [v. 28].

b. It must be noted in the very first place the addition of the word **everything**: ***omnia consummata sunt***. It through these words that the perspective

is broadened to include **the entire earthly Mission** that Jesus had personally received from His Father. This broad perspective becomes even more vast with the words that follow: ... ***so that the Scripture might be perfectly fulfilled...*** Justly, many modern exegetes connect this phrase – which expresses an intention, and a particular mean – not to ***I Thirst!*** – which follows here, but to the preceding verb: ***All was accomplished!*** Therefore, it is not a matter of the realization of a particular Prophecy on the thirst of Jesus, but rather of the **perfect fulfillment** of the Scripture **in its totality**, i.e., of Jesus Christ's entire **Messianic Program**: this has been described as Jesus will say to the Disciples of Emmaus, **in all that the Prophets had declared** – **in all that had been written by Moses and all the Prophets**. In the light of these comments, what we are considering here is **all that which all the Scriptures had stated in His regard** [cf. Lk 24:25, ff.].

2. However, also the two temporal expressions at the beginning of the phrase also have their importance: ***after this ... from that hour ... when ...!*** These refer back to the **preceding** episode, that of **the Mother of Jesus** and the **Beloved Disciple**, both at the foot of the Cross. In the manner of redacting the beginning of v. 28, the Evangelist integrates this preceding event into Jesus' **Messianic Program**, of which it constitutes, so to speak, the ultimate act: **when the Scripture was fully realized**. Now the scene described in vv. 25-27 is that, it might be said, of the **Birth of the Church**, in the persons of **Mary** and the **Beloved Disciple**. As has been wondrously stated by an author from the Middle Ages, Gerhoh of Reichersberg, **the Mother of Jesus is here, the New Principle of the Holy Church**. The act with which Jesus concludes His Messianic Mission on earth is that of indicating that **His own Mother** is now the **Woman**, the **eschatological Daughter of Sion**, of whom the Prophets spoke over the long centuries. At the same time, she becomes also **the Figure of the Church** as it has been so strongly emphasized over the long Patristic tradition. And the **Beloved Disciple** becomes **the figure of the faithful Believers**. Therefore, there is thus comprehended the multiplicity of resonances of the Final Word of Jesus: ***It is consummated!*** – upon which there falls here the whole emphasis. Just before dying, Jesus was able to state that He had drawn **His entire Messianic endeavor to a conclusion, in the founding of His Church**.

3. Let us give some thought now to the first verb in **v. 28**: Jesus' **knowing**. This participle is **applied three times to Jesus in the second part of the Gospel**: in the verses of introduction of the account of the Last Supper [13:1, 3] – at the beginning of the two chapters on the Passion, in the Garden [18:4] and at the end, on the Cross [19:28]:

*... Before the Festival of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were His in the world, loved them to the end ... Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into His hands...* [13:1, 3].

*... Knowing everything that was going to happen to Him. Jesus came forward and said: Who are you looking for?* [18:4].

*... After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, so that the Scripture should be completely fulfilled, He said: *I thirst*...* [19:28].

a. In this manner, Jn wishes to emphasize that during the entire account of the Passion, Jesus goes forward to meet death **in full cognizance** of the meaning

of the events as they unfolded. And this permits us to **enter into the Mystery of His Heart, and into that of His Knowledge**. The first and the third of these texts are the more solemn. It is necessary to clarify well just what it was of which Jesus had **perfect cognizance: on what in particular was it upon which His interior contemplation concentrated?**

b. Above all **His knowledge was orientated toward the fact that the entire scripture had been fulfilled**. In His Priestly Prayer of Farewell, Jesus had utilized the same expression, **the work that You have given Me to do, is perfectly fulfilled** [17:4]. The expression: **all has been completed** - from the Cross expresses therefore essentially that Jesus' **perfect obedience** to the Father's Plan, His cognizance of having brought to term **His Messianic Mission** described in Scripture. This obedience of Jesus to His Father, **joined to the Father's Love for Him** is described likewise in the allegory the **Good Shepherd**: ... *For this the Father loves Me, because I offer My life in order to take it up again ....I give it of Myself, I have the power of offering it and the power of taking it up again: this is the commandment that I have received from My Father* [Jn 10:17, f.].

c. However, the word : **it is consummated!** - pronounced by the dying Jesus [v. 30] likewise describes His cognizance that He had of having **completed His Mission of Salvation** that He had completed , **out of love** toward the community of His brothers and sisters. The verb used here derives from the Greek substantive, **telos** - **the end, purpose, scope**. This is what is read in Jn 13:1 in that **solemn verse of introduction** of the entire second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, the Mystery of the Passion: **He loved His own unto the end!** This can be seen in two senses: **He loved His own even to the very end** – and, **He loved them to the supreme manifestation of His love for them.**

d. Jesus manifests this supreme love on the Cross, when, in the Person of His Mother and of the Beloved Disciple, He constitutes the New People of God and communicates to them the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The elevation of Jesus on the Cross becomes an **exaltation** : He begins to exercise **His Messianic Regality** over the **new Christian community**. Jesus' last word is His: **It is consummated!** This is His **cry of triumph** as Messianic King sending out **His First Decree from His Throne, the Cross!**

4. Finally, we need to consider **19:28**, an ultimate co-relationship between his: **all things have been perfected!** - and His **I Thirst!** - at the end of the verse where Jesus expresses His heart-felt desire to send out the Holy Spirit over the Church.

a. It is necessary to observe attentively the multiple articulation of v. 28 which composed of four members. The first three where the Evangelist comments on the episode, are orientated toward the **past**. Which is always extended further: the first words [**after this**] refer directly to the **preceding scene**; the second formula [**everything was completed**] wishes to show that this last act of the dying Jesus is as the conclusion of His Messianic Mission of **His entire earthly sojourn and human life.**

b. Finally the perspective is enlarged even much more backward into the last phrase: Jn tells us here that in this manner there was also brought to term the realization of the **Messianic Mission** describes as the **entire OT [the Scripture]**. All of this makes up part of the reflections of the evangelist. Instead, the last word of the verse, is that of Jesus: **I thirst!** This is orientated in an inverse sense: this opens up a new prospective on the **future**, that period of time that is about to begin **after** the death of Jesus, the point of arrival for the OT, is to be continue by the action of the Holy Spirit, throughout all the time of the Church. We are here in this Messianic Consciousness of the dying Jesus at the point of conjunction of the two great parts of the **economy of salvation**.

c. It is in this Messianic consciousness of Jesus that there is realized the continuity between the OT and the NT. H. deLubac noted: The objective continuity between the **figure** and the **reality** is well translated, however, on earth **in a continuity of consciousness**. But this should not be sought elsewhere if this is understood in its fullest sense, as it takes place in the **Messianic Consciousness of Jesus**. In such a sacred place all is connected, all is unified. In this, all acquires its definitive meaning. In this, there is worked out in all clarity **that passage over from one Testament to the other**. In this, there is concentrated the entire dialectic of the two Testaments: the entire NT is generated from the OT, and contemporaneously, the entire OT is found interpreted by the NT. **Jesus enjoys consciousness of bringing all to fulfillment and at that same time, of transfiguring, bringing to fulfillment by transfiguring**. It is at this intuition of Jesus, identical with His consciousness of His role as Savior, that the Christian tradition will give such expression in so many forms.

5. However, it is necessary to take note that this **desire of communicating the Spirit to the Church** is expressed anew by Jesus just prior to dying: this is **His last word** just before His final **It is consummated!** – in vv. 28-30, the words: **I am thirsty!** These words are inserted between the two recurrences of **It is finished!** [v. 30]. This is one of the expressions of Jesus Himself, in fact, **His very last word**. This means that also the **desire** of giving His Spirit to the Church pertains to the **completion of His Messianic Mission conferred personally upon Him by His Father – and then subsequently shared with His Apostles**.

6. There remains some wonder perhaps in seeing the richness that these two phrases contain: **It is consummated – I am thirsty!** It is with these expressions that Jesus terminates His Messianic Mission - now it is precisely of this final **completion**, which unveils the true depth of what is in Jesus' soul at this crucial time – this is a clear manifestation of His **inner depth**, regarding His **messianic consciousness** at the instant of His death. **The Precious Blood from His sacred Side becomes the symbol of all this**: at the beginning, through the witnesses on Calvary, then for all men and women, up through the end of times.

7. We need here to take a step backward for an instant and consider further the **Pneumatological Theme**: the **Gift of the Holy Spirit** desired by Jesus is symbolized by the **Living Water**. Although this has been presented already at some length, it is helpful here to come to comprehend a bit better the precise relationship

here with the **Christological theme**. After all that has been noted above it will be sufficient to present just a few brief indications.

a. In each one of the three verses [vv. 28.30.34] all refers back to Jesus Himself. It is He Who says: **I am thirsty!** It is **He Who hands over, gives up, His Spirit** - and it is likewise from His sacred side that there flows the **water** which symbolizes the **Holy Spirit**. It is also from the sacred side of Jesus that there are to flow the **streams of living water** of the Holy Spirit [cf. Jn 7:38], as the **living water** poured forth from the Eschatological Temple of the Holy Spirit. With Origen one might say that **He is the Source of the Holy Spirit**.

b. However, but there should be noted further one more detail for v. 34: the tight unity – it might even be said even **the ‘fusion’, the mixture – between the Blood and Water**. The verb **flowed forth, poured out** - which calls to mind the water from the Desert Temple of Ezk [c. 47], is hinted at here in this context: **there flowed forth blood and water**. Not much can be made of the fact that the verb is singular – which is grammatically correct.

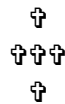
c. Regarding the prophetic text that uniquely announced **the streams of living water** [cf. Jn 7:38], Jn adds the word: **Blood**: meaning that between the side of Christ, pierced by the lance, and the **water** of the Holy Spirit, there is inter-placed, if one can speak this way, he **blood of Jesus Christ**. Or, rather the two elements seem et mixed up, inter-mingled, to the extent that **they form a kind of unity of symbolism**. And it is perhaps this which the tradition is suggesting here, even if unconsciously when it observes this **mixture** of the two symbols, the Blood and the Water, gives **a rose color liquid**: an image used in an ancient Hymn for the Vespers of the Paschal-tide. St. Gertrude, in her contemplation of **the sacro-sanct wound in the sacred side of Jesus Christ**, recounts that this was purified from every stain in the rose-colored liquid that the soldier’s lance made flow from the wound he inflicted. What would all this mean? If this is not drawn too far, it seems to provide a theological meaning, an implication, to the smallest of details.

d. Thus the question might be asked just what is symbolized by this that very tight union, this **‘admixture’**, of Blood and Water, because for many interpreters it is clearly indicated, implied in the sacred text. The meaning cannot be the following: the Holy Spirit is not only communicated by Jesus, as an autonomous and separated Gift, totally independent from Jesus Himself, but He is the Spirit **of** Jesus, even better said: this Spirit communicated by Jesus to the Church [= this is the reality symbolized by the **water**] is **that profound inner life of Jesus Himself** [the **Blood**], actualized in the Church by the Holy Spirit. It is **Christ** Who remains present in the Spirit.

e. The mystery of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Mystery of the **Cross of Jesus Christ**. The most urgent task of the Church of today is that of **revealing and of manifesting to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit that the Cross of Jesus Christ is forever the center and the culmination of our human history**.

8. In the light of the preceding analyses we can still add a clarification: the **Living Water** of the Holy Spirit renders present in the Church the **Blood of Jesus**. The Holy Spirit inspires the Faithful to unite themselves to Jesus Christ and to live in their turn all that the **Blood** symbolizes, i.e., the **Filial Life of Jesus Christ**. This would mean His **obedience** to the Father, His **interior oblation**, His **salvific love** for his own. And the **Blood** which flows from the sacred side of Jesus after His death is the sign that, in the Holy Spirit, He has freely accepted this death for the salvation of the world [Jn 3:14-17]. In our Catholic faith, we need to maintain that **Jesus' Interior Oblation** constitutes a genuine sacrifice: it is that invisible sacrifice of which St. Augustine spoke long ago.

9. Thus there is prolonged and there is made daily actual in the Christian community the redemptive action of Jesus Christ. He transmits to the Faithful His profound inner life and gives them the possibility of participating in it in the Holy Spirit. The Church, indeed, is nothing other than Christ continued [Ga 2:20] – the Holy Spirit is the actuality of Jesus Christ. The Life of Faith for all Christians in the Holy Spirit, is a participation in the profound inner life of Jesus Christ, Savior of the World.



## CONCLUSIONS

[1] At least two aspects are new in this reflection:

[a] The first insists on the Christological concentration of the passage. The **Blood and Water from the Pierced Side of Jesus Christ** symbolize - and help the faithful to comprehend more profoundly - that which Jesus lived in the most profound depths of His being at the instant of His death: His loving obedience to His Father, His love for humanity and the action of the Holy Spirit. The symbol of His **Blood** that flowed forth from His Sacred Side permits us thus to accede, approach, through this **Gateway to Life** to the deepest interior consciousness of Jesus Christ, to the depths of His holy soul. Despite the absence of the two words: **opened/ heart** we discover therefore, by having recourse to the symbolism and a careful exegetical analysis of the context, two **traditional themes**: the **opening of the sacred side** and the **Heart of Jesus Christ**.

[b] On the other hand, the **water** from His side symbolizes the Holy Spirit of Whom Jesus is the Temple and of Who He becomes the Source. The intimate connection of the Symbols of **Blood and Water** also results from the preceding analysis. This does nothing more than reinforce that which had already been indicated in the very structure of the text: the surprising parallelism within the Christological and Pneumatological Themes stand out: the **Blood** and the **Water** are the symbols of the deep interior life of Jesus Christ and of His total Gift of the Holy Spirit.

[c] As is known, **the intimate relationship here between Christology and the Pneumatology** is a theme much studied in recent years [cf. M. Bordoni]. The passage contemplated here [**Jn 19:34**] offers a deeper comprehension of all this. We would like now **to compare further these results** of ours with the interpretations of Jn 19:34 in the **Patristic tradition** and that of the **Middle Ages**.

[2] The study of the eloquent symbol of the **Blood** has orientated scholars **every more deeply into the interiority of the dying Jesus Christ in these culminating instants of His earthly sojourn**: this interiority was indeed revealed by Him in His last words, in a most eloquent manner: **I thirst! It is consummated!** Because of the **emphasis on the existential dimension** of the scene, i.e., the effort to remove something of the veil on **the deepest and most profound subjectivity of Jesus Christ at the instant of His death**, regarding **His most sublime inner consciousness** – it is only normal that such lofty aspects – these mysteries deeply attracted **the Mystical Tradition of the Middle Ages**, precisely at this point where formal dogma can go no further. **After the definitions, the next step is for the saintly Mystics**. We will present four examples here:

[a] **St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, the Doctor of Grace as 'Filiation'**: let us recall briefly here the deeper meaning of **Consummatum est!** which is called back to our minds and hearts through the symbol of the **Blood**: Jesus solemnly declares that **He has perfectly carried out the Personal Messianic Mission that His Father entrusted to Him [and which He handed on to His disciples on Easter night, showing His Sacred Stigmata, as *the Father sent me...* - Jn 20], and which embodies the Father's will, Plan, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled – the *apocalyptic 'must'* – *the prophetic 'had to'*!** Jesus thus manifests **His Filial, Loving Obedience to the Father**. This theme is uniquely found in St. Catherine of Siena, and an application to the Life of Grace, as noted in Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, OSB. In one of her *Dialogues*, St. Catherine hears from the Lord: 'Let the place where you are, be Christ Crucified, My Only-Begotten Son, indwelling and **hiding in the cavern of His sacred side** ... In that Open **Heart** you will find My charity and of your neighbor. However, out of honor for me, Eternal Father, and **to carry out that obedience that I placed in Him** for your salvation, He had recourse to that shameful death of the Most Holy Cross' [c. 124].

[b] **William of Saint-Thierry**: the **Filial** aspect of this profound life of Jesus Christ was well emphasized by this mystic. He exhorts us that through the **open door we all enter into Your heart**, O Jesus ... all the way into Your holy soul – and petitions the Savior to open the sacred side of His Body, **where all those might enter there where they desire to see the secrets of the Son**.

[c] **St. Gertrude of Helfta**: in Jn, **the streams of living water** that flow out from the sacred side of Jesus Christ are truly **a symbol of the Holy Spirit** [Jn 7:38, f.]: Jesus is indeed the Temple of the Holy Spirit, or, as **Origen** noed, the **Source of the Holy Spirit** This theme reappears in the *Herald* of St. Gertrude of Helfta, in a section entitled: **The Heart of Jesus the Dwelling Place of the Holy**



**Spirit**'. Her text continues: '**Like an eagle**, which with rapid flight, falls upon a cadaver, He [the Holy Spirit] descends precipitously **under the form of a dove**, with a most speedy batting of its wings, on to the **sacrament of life**, seeking so to speak, **the most sweet Heart of Jesus Christ**, and He penetrated there in order to show clearly that He Himself was **enclosed**, in a perfect manner, in the most Holy breast...

[d] **Sts. Catherine & Gertrude**: the connecting together of Jn 19:28, 30 and 13:1 makes it also clear that for Jn, **the Death of Jesus, accepted freely by Him**, was equally **the supreme manifestation of His love for His Father and His 'own'**. This idea was already present in the text of St. Catherine and is frequent also in St. Gertrude: See how, because of the love that I have for you, that I have been suspended for you, naked and disdained, my body covered with wounds and all my members bloody. My heart is moved by such a sweetness of love for you...!

[3] Let us return now to the era of **the Fathers of the Church**: and just how to situate our exegesis into some relationship with the Patristic interpretations, some of whom we noted above.

[a] In their exegesis of **Jn 19:34**, so many wise representatives of this tradition of the Fathers usually locate this verse into a much broader perspective: on the one hand, that of the entire Salvation History [e.g. seeing it as the **Gateway to Paradise**; or the **new Noah's Ark**, both of which **prefigure entrance into the true and eternal life**, through the opening in the sacred side of Jesus Christ. Then, on the other hand, they saw the **Church** and its **sacramental life** through which the Faithful would realize this entrance into life.

[b] One aspect above so many of the others assumes major importance in the **Liturgy** from the Fathers and this is found in Pius XII's *Haurietis Aquas* [1956]. It is that of the **wounded Heart of our Redeemer** where the Church is born. And there is often cited here in this regard the Hymns of Vespers of the old Feast of the Sacred Heart: ... **From the pierced Heart, the Church/ joined to Christ, is born!** This **Heart is the Gate on the Side of the new Ark of the Covenant of Mercy for the salvation of humanity**. But, if one did not wish to remain on the level of metaphors, it is required to explain that which is meant when it is stated that the Church is born [at least 5 theories: **Kerygmatic; Christmas; Eucharistic; Stigmatine; Pneumatological**].

[4] At this point there rises spontaneously a further question: these later developments of Patristic theology and of the Liturgy do they still have some foundation in Jn's text? If these interpretations are indeed totally extrinsic to Jn, they would be most fragile views in the sights of modern critical exegesis.

[a] Many biblical scholars, accustomed to a scientific rigor of imposed methodology, or even by down-right indifference, or even with no little disdain – would discard such interpretations as 'pietistic', and totally extraneous to the Gospel. On the contrary, if the tradition does nothing else, other than placing in evidence and amplifying **the virtuality of the text** which can already be placed to the fore with a

rigorous analysis of the structure of the passage, the case is different: then, these later interpretations are precious for the biblical scholar herself/ himself, in that these views might assist the modern scholar to perceive better the different resonances – and therefore, **the objective profundity of the text.**

[b] And the inverse is likewise true: the exegetical study of the past, indeed situated and deeply embedded in its earlier context, remains indispensable for both the Patrologist as well as for the Theologian. This would furnish for them a precious indication that allows placing in evidence that which is the more valid among the many Patristic themes. The reason here is that it is truly necessary to recognize that these latter remain very often on the level of **prefigurations**, of **symbols** – and might say little **regarding the profound life of Jesus Christ Himself.**

[5] We will limit ourselves here to examining the theme of **the opening of the sacred side of Jesus Christ**, much pondered by the fathers of the Church in two directions: **going backward to the Adam, and his wife, taken from his side [Gn 2] – or forward, the Church.**

[a] **The First Adam**: one of the most synthetic texts seems to be that of St. Augustine who has already been noted. In order to lead to a deeper comprehension of the terms of the mystery of the **Opened Sacred Side of Jesus Christ** he has recourse to two biblical images: that of the side of **the first sleeping Adam** [and, of course, of his **rib!**] – from which is drawn his wife **Eve**, a figure of the **Church**.

[b] Then, there is the image of the **Door, Gate of the Ark** which offers a refuge to the living beings and this saves them from the Flood. However, it needs to be noted that the image plays here simultaneously in two opposite senses: **Eve comes out from** the side of Adam, where as **the living beings hasten to go in through, to enter into** the salvific Ark.

[c] When therefore, this two-fold **opening** of the sacred side – symbolizing the side of the **sleeping Adam**, and **the Door of the Ark in the flood** - is applied to the **Church**, as in the Hymn of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: in the **first** case, it is a symbol of **coming out**, as the Church **being born from the open side of Christ dead** on the Cross - and then in the second case, that of **salvation** by entering into it.

[d] As a result, St. Augustine adds a clarification: the opening was the Gate of Life. But here again, there remains a certain embarrassment for a clear excess in the dialectic: through this **Door, Gate**, there is the symbol of **entering into life** – and yet, St. Augustine explains that through this **Gate**, there poured forth the **sacraments**. And this fact is once again of movement of **flowing forth from**. The great Doctor of Hippo does not say it and one understands why. If in all this development he does not speak of Jesus Christ, it because the discussion remains on the level of **figures**.

[6] Now it is precisely on these two pints that Jn concentrates his full attention and offers us certain important clarifications.

[a] Also in his text he passes from the internal to the external, from the visible to the invisible, from the symbol to the mystery. However, this is a matter of the Mystery of Jesus Christ on His Cross. On the one hand, the Blood which flows from His sacred side is shown externally, of course, but as a **symbol**. This leads us to fathom more deeply by contemplation toward the interior of Jesus Christ, toward the unfathomable mystery of the depths His inner divine life and His hypostatic Union of Grace.

[b] Furthermore, what indeed this **life** truly is made clear by His two dramatic expressions: **I am thirsty! Consummatum est!** We have already seen the multiple theological consequences of these final words. That which strikes the believing student in Jn's text is that on the one hand there is no incoherence on the level of **imagery** [cf. the structure, the opposing movement of the series of arrows pointing back and forth].

[c] There is really only one movement, that from the external to the internal [toward the **Christological** level] – and there is a unique movement from the internal to the external to the **Pneumatological** level].

[d] On the other hand Jn leads us to **overcome the plan of the images in order to arrive in a faith-filled contemplation toward the reality itself**: the **water** symbolizes the Holy Spirit Who comes to us as communicated – and the **blood** symbolizes the profound mystery of the depths of the interior life of Jesus Himself, to which we have access.

[e] Similarly, Jesus sates elsewhere that He is the **Gate [for the sheep, Jn 10:9]** because He provides access to life [10:10], Further, He says that He is the **Way** toward the **Life of the Merciful Father**. Yet, He Himself, Jesus, is Himself that **Life** [14:6]. It is only in the light of Christ Himself do the prefigurations from the Book of Gn acquire their full meaning.

[7] All of this however, does not mean that the biblical typology would have by now lost its value. On the contrary: because when the scene of the Pierced sacred Side of Jesus had been explained in its **Christological sense** in its Johannine context, the recourse to the prefigurations of the OT permits then to give to it an amplitude that is quite broad, and to situate it in the over-all totality of Salvation History. This then assists us to comprehend better that truly the Heart of Jesus Christ is likewise the Heart of the World and all of History.

[8] An analogous observation has to be made for the ecclesial perspective that the Fathers ordinarily open with regard to Jn 19:34.

[a] Let us remember that according to the interpretation that is more traditional in the East as in the West, one of the aspects of the **birth of the Church is indeed Calvary** [cf. Mary the Mother of the Church in great agony!], from the side

of the **Sleeping [in death] Second Adam**. The most common explanation held that the Water and the Blood of the side represent the **sacraments** of **Baptism** and of the **Eucharist** and these are **the Gateway of Access** to the Church and to salvation. But in this presentation, there is a shift in emphasis - it is **no longer Christ on the Cross who is the object of the contemplation**. He is seen only as the point of origin of the life of the Church.

[b] It is no longer a matter of **entering** into the **Opened Heart** as would seem required by the comparison with the entrance into **the Ark of Salvation** in the flood, as the Mystics would note in a later Middle Ages, but rather of **entering** into the **Church**. In the Gospel of Jn, on the contrary, as we think this meditation might have already noted the prospective is directly **Christological**, no longer **sacramental or ecclesial**.

[c] This immediate of the text is important for the ecclesial interpretation itself, which was quite wide spread among the Fathers. This allows to connect the **sacraments to their Source** and the **life of the Church to the deepest inner life of Jesus**. It is necessary to show that the **New Life** communicated in the Church **by the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist** is nothing other than **the very deepest inner life of Christ**, that precisely which has been **unveiled for us in the episode of the Cross**. Otherwise the impression would be given that the Church is too separated from Jesus Christ.

[9] But, if we wish to remain in the **Christological** perspective of Jn, we can still maintain that **the Church is born from the wounded side of Jesus Christ**. This would seem almost uncontested in Catholic Circles, one of the aspects of the Church coming into being.

[a] Perhaps, too, we have to add a clarification on to what the Fathers held. It is necessary to remember that in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, **the Calvary scene also has an eminently ecclesiological dimension**: the account of the episode of Jn 19:25-26, involving **the Mother of Jesus** and His **Beloved Disciple** at the foot of the Cross - develops precisely the theme under consideration here. This, too, describes the **nativity** of the Church – **Mary is the Church being born** and the **Beloved Disciple re-presents Believers** of all times. **Looking on the One they have pierced** is the **contemplation of faith** in the Crucified Lord from His pierced side [19:37] – and this symbolizes **the faith of all believers, this ‘describes’ what it means to be a among the ‘Faithful’**. All of this is accomplished and witnessed to, **so that you might believe!**

[b] The Church is constituted around Christ, **raised up – on the Cross [in the resurrection]** – in the measure in which believers **faithfully contemplate Him** - they need **to believe in Him** and **take part in His life**. That which was said about the Good Shepherd holds valid also here: the **Messianic flock** is formed around Jesus the Shepherd precisely because the Sheep - **His lambs** - recognize Him [Jn 10:27].

[c] In a parallel manner, Jesus **raised up from this earth** draws all to Himself [12:32], and is in this manner that they are **led back into the unity** as the

**dispersed Children of God** [11:52]: this one point of convergence, *into one*, where all are gathered together seems to indicate Jesus on His Cross, after His being **raised up**. The condition why this **unity** is realized is that all **look on the one they have pierced** [ 19:37].

[d] And therefore, precisely through their **contemplation in faith on the wound in His Sacred Side** that believers may take part in the **profound interior life of Jesus Christ**, in His **filial life**, in **His love for His 'own' even to the end**. The **Faithful** are **called to persevere in that life according to the Holy Spirit** which He Himself communicates, i.e., in its **two** dimensions in the life of Jesus **symbolized by the Blood and the Water from His pierced Sacred Side**.

[10] The great scholars are able to clarify this even more , by placing the eager Faithful to listen to, to contemplate upon, all the resonances of the theme of the **Living Water** in Jn. **The Water which flows from the Sacred Side of Jesus is the Living Water of the Holy Spirit** [19:30.34]. However, as Jesus Himself said to the Woman of Samaria, ever person has been invited to **drink** from this special **Water** that He was about to **Give**. Thus, she, and all who imbibe in the **living water**, would become **in Him a Font of this special salvific water, giving new life to all who drink it, unto eternal life.** [4:14].

[a] Nonetheless, this **Living Water** was in the beginning **in Jesus**: it is from His sacred side, that there would flow forth those **salvific streams of living water** [7:38]. For all those who are **thirsty, as are all those who believe in Him, Jesus Himself is therefore the vibrant Source of the living water**. However, this Water which on the Cross does indeed flow forth from His side, **symbolizes His most profound inner depths of His life** – it is **of this interiority of His** that those who will **persevere in looking contemplatively on Him Whom they have pierced, become the 'Faithful'**.

[b] As is clear for so many angles, this water is meant to be imbibed – and its scope is **not to be frustrated** as in the old adage: 'you may lead one to the fountain, or to the well, but you cannot force him/ her to drink' – **all are called!** This means, **the entire mystery of the total, profound interiority of the Person and Mission of Jesus Christ is meant to be accepted in persevering faith.** All must be welcomed, interiorized in each of the believers according to each individual's capacity of **loving response**.

[c] It is in this ideal that the **Church** is intended, and this is how its faith is to be developed: in all prayer begin with the Passion [Teresa of Avila]. This means nothing more than to **respond through a persevering contemplative Faith** [cf. **DV 8; SC 2**] to the call of **an intensifying participation** in the very **interior life of Jesus Christ**, symbolized by **Blood**. This is all actualized in the Church through the **Holy Spirit**, symbolized by the **Water**.

[d] Therefore, when the Fathers of the Church maintain that the Church is **born** from the sacred side of Jesus Christ, or from His Sacred Heart, they means

this in a directly **Christological** sense, and they remain perfectly in the over-all perspective of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel.

[e] One might cite in this regard a particularly suggestive text from Pseudo-Cyprian:

‘...The Law of Christians is the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. And that which the ancient Prophet prays: **...Thy Law is in the midst of my heart!** [Ps 39:9 – the old Latin translated this as: *lex tua in medio ventris mei* !] He was **struck on the side of His bosom; Blood mixed with Water poured forth in abundance from His bosom, He constructed His Holy Church and transmitted to it the Holy Law of His Passion**, since He had said: ***If anyone is thirsty, let him come and drink***, he who believes in Me. According to the word of Scripture: ***From His Breast will flow streams of water...***

[f] The Church is born directly from the wound of His side, from the very bosom of Jesus, in the sense that the New Life of believers, **when they turn their contemplative gaze on the one they have pierced** [19:37]. This is the very life of Jesus Christ which now becomes the life of the Church. As St. Ambrose [In Ps 118] put it **The secret chamber of the Church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ**.

[11] Having pondered and presented all this it is nonetheless legitimate, after much reflection on it all, to think in **an ecclesial context**, to provide even a new reading of the passage, also the **sacramental reading**. Jn himself has given the example in **1 Jn 5:6-8**: he recalls that **Jesus has come with water and the blood – and he adds in the present, the Holy Spirit** [inspiring the sacramental reception in the order established by the Church], that **the water and the blood converge into one testimony**.

[a] The inversion of the terms [**water and blood**, in the place of **blood and water**] is explained in part with the allusion to **Baptism** and to the **Eucharist**. This is the type of reading that will be taken up again in the later tradition.

[b] However, **the directly Christological interpretation** of the Blood and the Water, that which Jn proposed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, is presupposed and remains indispensable: the **new life** granted to Christians in the Church, is the **very depths of the interior life of Jesus Christ**, that which has been **revealed and communicated on the Cross – and remains an opened scroll because of of the Immolated Lamb, available to the persevering contemplation of the Faithful through the ages**.

[c] The same author of 1 Jn insists for the ages: **God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son!** [1 Jn 5:11]

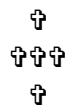
## FINALE

[1] This contemplated interpretation of the episode recalled in Jn 19:34 has been simply the attempt to bring forward its **spiritual sense**, in the two-fold meaning that is given to this word in tradition: the **interior sense** of a passage of the Gospel, its **Christological sense**, its relationship to the integral Mystery of Jesus Christ.

[2] Through the **subjective** point of view, i.e., from **the interior principle** that animates the Faithful across the centuries, it is the **pneumatological sense**, that which is discovered in the light of faith, in communion with the consciousness of the entire **ecclesial** tradition.

[3] However, it is worthy of note that in Jn 19:34 the **Christological** and the **Pneumatological themes** converge and finish by becoming **fused**: the integral Mystery of Jesus Christ is the mystery of the **filial life** of Jesus Christ but precisely so that it is also **the Mystery of the Holy Spirit**, i.e., **the Mystery of the Living Water given** by Jesus Christ Himself. This has no other meaning than to **have believers become the life-long, faithful and persevering contemplatives of the One Whom they have pierced**.

[4] The exegesis proposed here in these reflections also retain a major importance for the Theology of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This is especially so because of the effort that has been made to bring forward **the centering of all on the episode of the Pierced sacred Side of Jesus Christ**. The conclusions that have been reached here **only prolong the intuitions so prayerfully confided to the Church by earlier tradition**, above all that of the **mystical tradition** of the Middle Ages. With the **Fathers of the Church**, this confers a greater appreciation on the various **33** invocations of the **Litany of the Sacred Heart: Heart of Jesus .. pierced by the lance ... full of love and goodness ... Source of life and holiness... have mercy on us!**



**V. A Liturgy of Forgiveness:  
Christophany and Gift of the Spirit<sup>107</sup>  
Jn 20: 19-23**

**THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SIGNS OF THE LIVING CHRIST  
[A New Epiphany]**

**Presentation**

**[1]** In the description of this appearance of Jesus to His 'own' after the resurrection [20:19-23] – and that which follows [vv. 24-29]- some exegetes have seen a kind of **Liturgical presentation**, spiced with temporal annotations: **the evening of the first day, after the Sabbath** –hints of the **Day of the Lord**. Then, there were clear indications, like **8 days later [20:26]**.<sup>108</sup>

**a.** Numerous traits of the appearance of **Easter Night** will be considered through the years as the **liturgical celebration of the Christian assembly**. The designation of the appearance as **the Coming of the Lord**. This expression enjoyed a considerable emphasis in the Eucharistic Celebration. Very soon, the early community saw all of this in harmony with the Lord's resurrection – **the first day of the week**:

... **7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread**, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and he prolonged his speech until midnight... [Ac 20].

... **2\* On the first day of every week**, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come... [1 Co 16].

**b.** All that culminates in the Profession of Faith of the Apostle, Doubting Thomas: **My Lord and My God [20:28]**. This, too, seems to have a **liturgical provenance**: the disciples gathered on the Day of the Lord - a blessing would be given: **Peace to you!**. Then the Holy Spirit would descend on the participants and there would be pronounced **the words of absolution**. Jesus Christ is present – this provides more than a hint of the **Eucharist**, and the **proclaimed word of God**.

**c.** In the text of Jn 20, there is a three-fold reference to the first day of the Week:

... **NOW\* on the first day** of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb... **19\* On the evening of that day, the first day of the week**, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." **20** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side ... **6 Eight days later**, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you."

<sup>107</sup> Fabien BLANQUART, *Le premier jour. Etude sur Jean 20*. Lectio Divina 146. Paris: du Cerf 1991.

<sup>108</sup> These first three pages: cf. Giuseppe Ferraro, *Il Paraclito, Cristo, il Padre nel 4º Vangelo*. Vatican 1996, pp. 37, ff.



27\* Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29\* Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

d. This certainly seems to refer to the weekly celebration of the first Christian communities. In the course of these it was profoundly believed that the Lord came into the midst of His disciples and they would exchange **a greeting of peace**. His greeting would reflect liturgical practices in a **Eucharistic context**. The allusion to the **pierced side** of the Lord would recall to mind the **Paschal Lamb**. It is not impossible that the added particular of the **doors being closed** would remind the faithful of that **Exodus Night** when the Hebrews left the Land of Captivity. Then, in this same **Liturgy**, there would be the calling down of the Holy Spirit, the Confiteor of sins, and the testimony of the Apostles regarding the Lord's resurrection.

[2] The **Communication of the Holy Spirit**, accomplished by Jesus on behalf His Disciples through the symbolic gesture of **breathing upon them** assumes also a sublime liturgical sacramental characteristic as well as one with a deep Trinitarian insight:

a. **Liturgy**: for some commentators, this act has remained in the liturgy of the Church for the Blessing of Oil, mixed in with balsam, to make it **sacred chrism**. After having extended the invitation to pray, before reciting the formula of consecration, the Bishop breathes over the container of the new Chrism. This is found in the **Reformed Roman Pontifical**, produced according to the norms of Vatican II, and promulgated by **Paul VI**.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore others have also thought that here Jn's gospel calls to mind an ancient Christian Ritual of Ordination – there was also a breathing upon candidates during the ritual of ordination.

b. **Trinitarian Theology**: there may be noted a deep tie between these verses:

19\* On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21\* Jesus said to them again, "**Peace be with you.** As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." 22\* And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23\* If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." [Jn 20].

There is an opening up of new life – the closed door, the opened side. There is a full manifestation of the Trinity. Jesus manifests Himself, communicates His divine life. The high point of His manifestation and communication is the **breathing upon his 'own'**. This is the **New Creation, Infusing new life**. The Pierced Side is the source of the **Living Water** [Jn 19:34, the Symbol of the Holy Spirit, promised as the Streams of Living Water, Jn 7:37-39, on Tabernacles] and **the Blood**. Here there is close association between the **Immolated Lamb and the Gift of the Holy Spirit**. The Risen Lord, showing His Sacred Stigmata conserved in His Risen Body, and

<sup>109</sup> cf. Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, Citta' del Vaticano 1980, n. 22.

**His breathing upon them**, communicates to them the divine life and the Spirit Who bestows this life is the mysterious expression. There is strengthened here the deep bond between Christ and the Holy Spirit – a **New Epiphany of Christ** and **the Spiration of the Holy Spirit**. These are aspects of **the same mystery of the Divine life** in so far as this is donated to those who **receive** it, **and welcome it in faith**.

c. The **Sacred Synaxis** celebrated in the **Eucharist** also commemorates the **Holy Communion lived eternally within the Most Blessed Trinity**, the central **Mystery of the Faith**. These passages in Jn recall to mind the Most Holy Trinity, the Spirit, Jesus Christ and the Father are all **received**, **welcomed** by the Faithful. He now sends His Apostles in the Manifestation of His Glorious Stigmata in His Person and in the salvific goods that He gives through the outpouring of **these streams of Salvation** [Is 12, 1, ff.] symbolized by His own Blood and Water. In all this, these gifts, nor the Spirit Himself, can be received, welcomed by an incredulous world. All is received by the believing disciples who want to **be the Faithful in the joy of the Resurrection and the glorification of the Lord**. This sublime unity of the Spirit Paraclete, Jesus Christ and the all Merciful Father, is expressed by the variety of verbs Jn uses: the verbs of **immanence, being, remaining** – now is expressed on the part of human beings, in their attitude of **welcome, reception in Faith**, toward the Merciful Author of Salvation.

[3] In our passage under discussion regarding the sacred Stigmata, it is noteworthy that the scene is presented **first by Mary Magdalen** – in whose heart Christ had risen in her repentance - she proclaims: **I Have seen the Lord!** [cf. Jn 20: 1, 11, ff.] – the first witness of the resurrection. Then there is the doubting Thomas Jn 20: 24, ff.]: converted by the **vision of the Glorious Wounds**. These are images of the Church: male and female; hierarchy and laity; sinners all, redeemed also by the resurrection: ... **24 but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25\* who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification...** [Rv 4].

[4] **To SEE/ BELIEVE** in this **Jn 20** is repeated throughout the Chapter, and this establishes a hierarchy of varied modalities in the accession to **Paschal faith**:<sup>110</sup>

[a] **A certain vision, listening to the Risen Lord:**

... 8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and **he saw and believed**. [v. 8] - ... 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they **saw** the Lord. .. [v. 20] - ... 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have **seen** the Lord."... [v. 25] - ... then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and **see** my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side ... [v. 27, 28] - do not be faithless, but believing." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29\* Jesus said to him, "Have you **believed** because you have **seen** me? **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.**"

<sup>110</sup> Fabien BLANQUART, *Le Premier Jour ...*, pp. 154, ff.

**[b]     A religious intuition, submission, at the sight of the sheets and binding cloths that had been left in the sepulcher:**

... 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, 7 and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself... [v.8].

**[c]     Finally, a generous adherence to Paschal Faith solely on the strength of scriptural witness and that of tradition:**

... 9\* for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes... [v. 9] - ... 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." 26 Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." 27\* Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"... [vv. 25, ff.].

**[5]     The text presently to be contemplated – this is the ultimate Epiphany, the Glorious Christophany:**

... 19\* On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."p 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21\* Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." 22\* And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23\* If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."...

†††

## **A.     The Manifestation of the Signs of the Risen Lord**

### **Brief Introduction:**

**[1]**     This is the third scene of this Jn 20: (The Discovery of the Signs of Death [vv. 1-10]; The revelation of the Signs of the Living Body [vv. 11-18] – The Manifestation of the Signs of the Risen Lord [vv. 19-23] – Faith at the Witness concerning these Signs [vv. 24-29] – The Obtaining of Eternal Life as the end result [30-31].

**[2]**     There are two distinct parts here: here the actors are Jesus and His disciples are the principal protagonists and Jesus takes the main role:

- the first part of these few lines calls to mind **the opened, pierced Side and the hands of Jesus** – with their nail prints – as expression that Jesus indeed has risen! [vv. 19-20] – this is the **CHRISTOPHANY**.

- the second, is the sign of the risen Lord, **breathing upon His followers, Personally sending His Apostles just as the Father had original sent Him] on the mission to forgiven sin** [vv. 21-23] – this is **THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT**.

[3] The structure of this scene – like the episcopal salutation at a liturgy, with a two-fold salutation of Jesus: **Peace to you!** This manifests the manifestation of Jesus, this **Christophany** and His **Gift of the Holy Spirit**. The first work here is the that of **the manifestation of Jesus** – and he second is **the conclusion** of that manifestation, **the Christophany, He now breathes forth 'the Other Paraclete**.

[4] This structure shows well the parallelism of the two conclusions, drawn from the earlier part of the narration. The emphasis through out is the **ECCLESIAL CHRISTOPHANY** and the **GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**.

††

## COMMENTARY [Jn 20:19-23]

### [A] THE CHRISTOPHANY

#### [I] JESUS PRESENTS HIMSELF

**v. 19:...** *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you.*

a. It is always helpful to study these central passages comparing with other evangelists – the theory is that Lk 24 and Jn 20 shared a common source:

#### Lk 24:36-49:

... 36\* As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you." \* 37 But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? 39\* See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. \*

41 And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.

44\* Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46\* and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47\* and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, \* beginning from Jerusalem.

48 You are witnesses of these things. 49\* And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."

b. Dialogue was one of the characteristics of the preceding scenes here – whereas, right here it is Jesus' **monologue** that dominates. Jesus speaks, and He is the only one to do so. The repentant Disciples listen and it is the narrator who brings the reader into their reactions. This verse is an introduction – and it manifests three clear parts:

- the time;
- the place;
- the entrance of Jesus into the scene.

[1] **THE TIME: ... 19\* Therefore, on the evening of that day, the first day of the week...**

[a] This is fully in accord with the Johannine style, as can be seen from a variety of verses from his Gospel from the style of his 'Inaugural Week' introducing Cana of Galilee, he is **very time-conscious in presenting the Eternal word:**

...39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour...

[Jn 1]

... - 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked...

[Jn 5]

... 53 So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death... [Jn 11].

... 19\* Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you... [Jn 14]

... 23 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. 24\* Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. 25\* "I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in my name ... [Jn 16].

[b] This 'Time Consciousness' seems to manifest a continuity with OT, and often provides a certain **Eschatological Color** to the present moment. The narrator makes clear that the reader understands that this is still **the first day of the week**.

[c] The conjunction, *therefore*, indicates that the evening of this Day is presented in a clear continuity, and as a consequence to the **dawn of the Day of the Lord**. of hours ago. This indications here seem to offer here a certain **liturgical character** - continuing throughout the *in the beginning*, with which both Gen & Jn open. The insistence on **evening/ night** recall to mind the Creator's overcoming the **desert, darkness and the deep** - and there can be a hint here of the **First Paschal Night** and the march across the sea:

16\* When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Caperna-um. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, \* they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, 20 but he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going ... [Jn 6].

**[2] THE PLACE: ... the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews...**

**[a]** The closed doors are in the place mentioned above, but there is no specific mention of it here. The narrator seems far more intent of leading us to know this place more from the fact that the **disciples are assembled here**. In the first part of this same day, the only place explicitly mentioned is the **tomb**. In the second part, the place of the action has been changed. It is still the Holy City, Jerusalem, but the exact location is characterized by **the presence of the Disciples**. The two first scenes in this Jn 20 are indicated as the places where the disciples are gathered but this fact is not indicated. Mary Magdalen had set out to find Peter and the other disciple [v. 2] whom she reached [v. 10] Then, at the end of her encounter with Jesus, she accomplished the journey that distanced her from the garden and the Cross. She proclaimed to the Disciples that she had seen the Lord and what He had said to her [Jn 20:18].

**[b] The doors were closed:** Lk speaks of their **minds being closed**. However, this privileged scene was reserved for those 'locked within' the closed doors. The **fear of the Jews** was already noted earlier, already noted in Jesus' prophetic Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles:

... AFTER\* this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews \* sought to kill him. 2\* Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand. 3\* So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing. 4 For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."p 5 For even his brothers did not believe in him. 6\* Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. 7\* The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil. 8 Go to the feast yourselves; I am not \* going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come... 13\* Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him... [Jn 7].

This factor given by the narrator implies therefore, a certain return to their past, charged by the desire of the contemporaries of Jesus and His accomplishment:

... 38\* After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave... [Jn 19].

**[c]** The reader would be profoundly surprised by this abiding fear of the Disciples brought forward here in the narrative. Had not Simon Peter and the other Disciple already have entered the tomb? Had not Mary Magdalen already announced that she had seen the Risen Lord, and relayed His message to her? What, then, is this fear of the disciples? There are two reasons that emerge:

- the narrator wishes to recall to mind the past facts which will facilitate the presentation and of the signs of the Crucified and will permit Jesus being identified;
- he desires likewise to have the reader understand just who it is Who has converted the disciples. The development of Mary Magdalene was achieved by grace working in her.

It is indeed thanks to His intervention that the disciples are called to set aside all fear. He is indeed **the Conqueror of Fear**. Many exegetes point out that in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, through the word 'Jews' John has more in mind representing all those who do not accept the revelation of God regarding His only-begotten and most beloved Son and who rather persecute the believers and followers of Christ.

**[3] The Entrance on to the Scene of the Principal Actor here: JESUS'**  
**ENTRANCE:** Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you"...

**[a]** His arrival has been preceded by a certain number of others: there have been at least five visits to His tomb [vv. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8] – and Mary Magdalen's two visits brings her among the Disciples. All these visits have permitted the recalling to mind of the earthly dimension of the One Who now arrives in the midst of His Disciples. This Jesus is, at the same time, the Person Whose body is sought – and the Master, Who during His public life, was followed not only by the crowds, but also by a group of faithful disciples, dispersed at the moment of His Passion and is now being re-assembled on this Easter night.

**[b]** His arrival is announced in the text by the use of the aorist form of the verb. This will be taken up again in v. 24: ... **24\* Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came...** A few verses later [v. 26], the present tense of the verb is used: ... **Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you."** The aorist brings out the more the punctual aspect of this event. This time commands the following phrase: Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you!" ... The conjunction manifests the tie between the arrival of Jesus and the description of His attitude. The two verbs are habitually united in the manifestations of the Risen Lord as can be noted in v. 26: ... **Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you."**

**[c]** The expression, **and stood among them** is on the lips of John the Baptist: ... **but among you stands one whom you do not know... [Jn 1:26]**. His intervention reveals among his interlocutors an ignorance of Jesus like that of Mary Magdalene:

... while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ... 13\* They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14\* Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." [Jn 20].

**[d]** This **ignorance** is due to the Mystery of His Person which can only be made manifest on the strength of a specific revelation. The fact that Jesus remains in the midst of His disciples, of those who have been able to see Him, to approach

Him, to touch Him, but they still have not truly been able to know Him, surely indicates that **on this evening of the first day of the week**, Jesus will be completely revealed to them.

[e] The word **midst** is above all to be noted in the Crucifixion scene: ... **18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them...** [Jn 19]. The implied emphasis here seems to be that Jesus occupies the **central place** between two thieves. By reason of its context in the Passion narrative, this situation of Jesus is generally interpreted as an allusion to His **royalty**. It is possible that our expression contains this same allusion. Jesus comes and **He commands**. He commanded already at the end of the preceding scene, since He prohibited Mary from taking hold of Him, and gave her the order to she should go to the Disciples in order to announce to them the Good News of His Resurrection [vv. 17, 18]. He then will soon give the command to Thomas when he will be invited to practice the faith [v. 27].

[f] The verb **so say, speak** introduces then His special blessing. Here the verb is in the **present** tense. After a series of simple passages, thanks to which the narrator then reports a certain number of events, this present opens up the account on an intervention of Jesus. Each time that Jesus will begin to speak in our scene here and in the following one [**The expression of the Disciple regarding Faith in the Risen Lord**], His discourse is introduced with the verb **to speak, say** in the present tense. What this does is actualize the risen Lord's intervention within the unfolding of each passage: while the English translate this in the past tenses [**said, had said... in vv. 22, 27, 29**], this is due to a kind of sequence of tenses: but, in the **Greek the verb is always present, as though Jesus is speaking in each Liturgy**.

#### **v. 20 c: ... "Peace be with you...!"**

a. This salutation is composed of this brief sentence. These are the words of Jesus at the beginning of the **Christophany**. The word **Peace** in Jn is reserved to Jesus Himself, to the Master, and it is only utilized in this chapter [Jn 20: 19, 21, 26] and earlier in the Covenant accounts:

... **25 "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27\* Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid...** [Jn 14]

... **33\* I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."**..[Jn 16].

This bestowal of peace as a prayer takes up anew an old Judaic custom, that is the expression of the announced gift and it translates the **eschatological flavor of the entire event**.

b. In **Jn 14**, Jesus is addressing His Disciples and recalls to their minds His return to His Father in terms that are quite similar to these in **Jn 20: 18** He gives



them His Peace, i.e, **that messianic benefit awaited in the times of fulfillment and the New Covenant**. Allowing himself, centuries earlier, to look forward across the generations to that time of the **restoration of Israel**, the Prophet Ezechiel reports this word of God:

...11 "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep \* have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the fountains, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. 16\* I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; \* I will feed them in justice....23\* And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. 25 "I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods... [Ezk 34].

This is the New Covenant of Peace – this New Covenant will bring **security [34:25]; abundant nourishment [34:27]** the lot of the land will become a **plantation of peace, a New Garden of Eden**.

c. Thus, reflecting on **Ezk 34, Jn 14 and Jn 20**, this **Peace of the Lord** will banish both **trouble and fear [14:27; 20:19]**. This **Messianic, Eschatological Peace** invites **Joy [Jn 14:27, f.; 20:20]**. This is a Gift that comes with the **Paschal Event** – and this event **presupposes the Faith of the Disciples** [Jn 14:29; 20: 8, 29, 31].

d. In reassuring **His Disciples**, Jesus bestows on them His own **Peace**, which comes, by His **Passion**, by His **Victory over the world** [Jn 16:33] .This **Gift of Messianic Peace** leads the Faithful to understand **that the Risen Lord conquered Fear** [Jn 14:27] - **Evil** [Jn 14:30], i.e., **the Prince of this world** [Jn 16:11] and also **Sin** [Jn 16:8].

e. In **Jn 20**, Jesus' salutation leads the Disciples themselves to discover that there is **no place here for their fear**, that the **Death** that He reminds them of by the Glorious Wounds in His hands and in His side, has not kept Him in its clutches. Their Master is no longer the captive of Death, but **He has risen and their sins are forgiven**. This **Messianic Peace** announces **victory over Fear**, the **Prince of this World**, and **Sin**. **This is the triple Victory of the resurrection**.

## [II] THE 'MANIFESTATION' [Epiphany] OF HIS GLORIOUS STIGMATA

**v. 20:** ...When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side...

a. Jesus has just spoken: this phraseology introduces an imaged demonstration of the preceding discourse. Jesus, in showing His hands and His side, goes on then to reveal the **Peace** as the fruit of His Passion. There is consequently, an **identity** between the One Who **suffered** on the Cross, Who was buried, and the One Who **appears now** to His Disciples. Thus, after having insisted on **the signs of the resurrection in a first part** of the narrative, where there is called to mind **Jesus' humanity**, the narrator now goes on to insist upon the **signs of His Passion**, in a second part consecrated to the **Risen Lord**.

b. The verb to show assumes here its sense when it is connected to its six preceding usages. This is all connected to Ac 2, the account of **the Gift of the Spirit, on Pentecost**. In this context of the purification of the temple, the Jesus pose a question to Jesus:

... 18\* The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" 19\* Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."... 21\* But he spoke of the temple of his body. 22\* When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. [Jn 2].

c. This text provides the tie between the **sign** that was requested, the Body and the resurrection of Jesus, **fortifying the faith of the disciples** - a **liturgical context** seems between the lines, behind the scenes here. The verb **to show** pertains, therefore, to a context of the **demand for a sign**, a demand to which Christ responds in announcing His resurrection as the Foundation of the Faith in the Scriptures and in the ever-abiding Word of God.

d. Following the healing of the paralytic, Jesus then calls to mind his unique relationship to His Father and proclaims:

... 19\* Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. 20\* For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel...21\* For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. [Jn 5]

The Resurrection adds completion to the Father's works – this is the sign given by Jesus and presents it as the work of the Father and the Son.

e. In the course of the Feast of the Dedication, the Jews interrogate Jesus and finish this by threatening Him with stoning. In the face of this menace, Jesus in His turn questions His adversaries:

... 31\* The Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?"... [Jn 10].

The Jews then accuse Him of blasphemy. For all practical purposes, Jesus has revealed the origin of His works, viz, His Father. This revelation could only serve to astound His interlocutors. The verb **to show** refers to Someone Else and reveals Him.

f. A bit further on in Jn's Gospel, Jesus seems about to announce His return to His Father. Thomas confesses his ignorance with regard to Jesus' destination toward which His Master is heading. This is why Philip asks Him:

... 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." 9\* Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'... [Jn 14].

g. Jesus goes on to say that once He personally has departed, anyone who believes in Him, will be able to accomplish works that are even greater than His own. Philip's request is an appeal for such revelation. This revelation supposes in fact Jesus' departure and an open access to heaven for all those who are His Disciples:

...LET not your hearts be troubled; believe \* in God, believe also in me. 2\* In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also... [Jn 14].

h. In Jn 20, there is a presentation of this understanding regarding Jesus' return to the Father revealed also as the **Father of all the Faithful Disciples**.

...17\* Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." 18\* Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her... [Jn 20].

i. In using one more time this verb **to show** in v. Jn 20:20, the narrator is emphasizing that we are now in the **time of fulfillment** of the sign announced at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and of the fulfillment of His works that He has realized **coming from the Father**. He suggests that Philip's request has mercifully already been heard and that its fulfillment presupposes the departure of the Master. This departure has been worked out in a **Paschal Context** that has been made clear from the outset. In **showing His hands and His side**, Jesus leaves it to be understood that their contemporaries have sought to stone Him, and that they will have had their moment. Nonetheless, His sacred body, many times wounded and desecrated, leads to something beyond and above immediate history. He recalls to them that His passion has provided as **the sign of the resurrection**. This mystery is at one and the same time the **revelation of the Father and the path towards Him**.

j. This sacred Body had already been referred to earlier by the more customary, **from head to foot**: ...12\* and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.... [Jn 20]. This earlier text would refer to **a body laid out to rest in the tomb**. Here, though, in Jn 20, the text refers to this sacred Body through the Stigmata: **the hands and the side**: ... 34\* But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water... [Jn 19]. This reference indicates the Body that has been crucified, but here is risen and these sacred trophies of His Victory are being **shown, preserved as an eternal witness to the holocaust, an immolative, oblation *agape***'.

k. **From this pierced side, there flowed blood and water.** In His Discourse on the **Bread of Life**, Jesus speaks of His Blood, that of the Son of Man, as from a stream that gives eternal life: ... 54 he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56\* He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **abides in me, and I in him**. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, **so he who eats me will live because of me**. 58\* This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; **he who eats this bread will live for ever**..."... [Jn 6].

l. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman, it is the **water** that Jesus gives which becomes a **living stream flowing into life eternal**. This water in Jn is often a sign of the Holy Spirit:

... 14\* but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; **the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life**." 15\* The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, **that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw**."... [Jn 4]  
 ... 37\* On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, **"If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink**. 38\* He who believes in me, as \* the scripture has said, **'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water**.'" 39\* Now this **he said about the Spirit**, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet **the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified**... [Jn 7].

m. As for His **Sacred Hands**, they serve as the **sign of His merciful omnipotence** that the Son receives from the Father, a power which empowers Him to communicate eternal life:

... 35 the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. 36\* He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.... [Jn 3].  
 ... 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; 28\* and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, \* is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30\* I and the Father are one."... [Jn 10].  
 ... 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. 5\* **Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded**. p6 He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you **wash my**

**feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand." 8\* Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me."...[Jn 13].**

n. Thus, it may be very clear now that while the **wounded hands and the side** refer back to the Crucified Body of the Lord, they also refer as signs, announcing eternal life. It is not therefore astonishing that Jesus present these as **signs of the resurrection**.



### [III] THE DISCIPLES' RESPONSE IN JOYFUL PASCHAL FAITH

**v. 20 b:** ... Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord...

a. The conjunction **therefore**, which opens this second part of the same verse places in a deep relationship the **manifestation** and the **effect** that this produces on the Disciples. **Their development, spiritual growth, appears thus dependent on the arrival of Jesus into their midst**, and of the **revelation** that He makes to them on His arrival. This **eschatological, messianic joy** had already been announced in the course of His Priestly Prayer of Farewell:

... 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full... [Jn 15]  
 ... 13 But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves... [Jn 17].

As this is intimately bound to His '**Manifestation**', this **Joy** might be thought of as an effect of the **Eschatological Peace** that Jesus ardently desires for His Disciples.

b. The bond between the verbs **to rejoice/ to see** is likewise established in the other accounts of the Gospel. Jesus in other contexts speaks of this abiding **Joy**:

... 56\* Your father Abraham **rejoiced** that he was to **see** my day; **he saw it and was glad.**"  
 57\* The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" \* 58\* Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.".. [Jn 8].

This verse is inserted into the discussion in which the **Paschal allure** is evident. 'Death' is on the Jews' lips [Jn 8:52] and the path that Jesus is on will close the account with this proclamation: **I say to you, before Abraham was, I am!** The relationship of these verbs permits Jesus to call to mind the mysteries of **eternal life** and to allow **His own 'pre-existence'** to be laid bare.

c. In **Jn 16** Jesus announces His departure from the Disciples and His 'return' to His Father. He warns His 'own' that the Hour of their affliction has come. However, **they will see Him again**, and then their heart **will rejoice** [v. 22]: ... 22 So

you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you... [Jn 16]. After the resurrection, the Disciples are going to be gathered together again with a view to the up-building of **the New People of God**. Having known the sadness and the trial of His Passion and Death, **they will participate in the Joy of the Risen Lord.**

d. The Disciples have therefore been prepared for the **manifestation of Jesus**. They have learned that this **Joy of theirs corresponds to the Hope of Abraham** – that it **presupposes the pre-existence of their Master** and the **discovery of His Resurrection**. This last mentioned will mean **a victory over their fear, death and sin**; the **joy accorded by the Paschal Event** can no longer then be threatened by anything. All this pertains to the **New Times**.

e. This Joy depends on their being able to share in the **vision: ...blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God!** To express this, the narrator utilizes the complete expression: **to see the Lord** – in the aorist. This recalls **the vision of Mary Magdalen, in accomplishing her mission** [v. 18] but above all, the **joy of the 'other disciple' inside the Tomb itself** [v. 8]. The narrator tries very hard to have his readers grasp that the **Paschal Event**, in the wake **Jesus' initiative**, and rests on **the experience of the assembled Disciples**. The vision of the 'other disciple', the announcement of Mary prepares the reader to welcome, receive this experience.

**Summary:** this **Paschal Manifestation of His Glorious Stigmata** has enormous importance in the reflections of the Church. It indeed seems that Peter and the 'other disciple' as well as Mary Magdalene, have run, hastened so that **we, too, might arrive at this full revelation of the Risen Lord**. At the same time, all this calls to mind the **New Gathering of the Disciples** in which Jesus is at their Center. This therefore, inaugurates the time of a **New People** that has **seen the light of day in the Pasch**. The **Disciples, Apostles, are the first members of this community of the Faithful**. This is why this **Christophany** assumes an **ecclesial dimension** which aims at facilitating the introduction of this Second Table now, consecrated to the **outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Mission of the Disciples of all time**.



## B. THE OUT-POURING, THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE APOSTOLIC MISSION OF THE CHURCH [Jn 20:21-23]

### [I] JESUS' GREETING AND THE SENDING OF THE DISCIPLES ON HIS MISSION

This second part [like the first part, just considered] of this Document , which presents **the Appearance of the risen Lord [Christophany]** – and **the Gift of the Holy Spirit** – is divided into three segments:

- [I] The salutation and the being sent on Mission;
- [II] The Gesture of Jesus;
- [III] The Remission of Sins.

However, as in the prior Tableau, it is **the gesture of the Risen Lord** which is at the center of the account and which clarifies the words pronounced by Jesus.

**v. 21: ... 21\* Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."...**

a. This second salutation of the Lord takes up what He said earlier. This assures the tie between both these Tableaus and introduces the Apostolic Mission of the Disciples. The conjunction, **therefore**, as the adverb **again**, so frequent in Jn, indicates that it is necessary to look upon this second salutation as one logically following as a direct consequence of the earlier one, based on the model and as the continuity of the former. It is however, probable that the two Tableaus have perhaps earlier existed independently of one another. The taking up of the salutation is astonishing for some, and the name **Disciples** is now replaced by **them**. **These are among the last words of the Risen Lord and the Mission of the Church for all time.**

b. The yearning for Peace is immediately followed by a word of Jesus Who **sends His Disciples**. The second gesture of Jesus is found therefore to be preceded by a message, This is introduced by an expression that is much in accord with Jn's style: **...as... I, too**. This is found in two passages of parallel construction that pertain to the parable of the **Shepherd** and the one pertaining to the **Vine**:

- **Shepherd**: 14 I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, 15\* as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep... [Jn 10]. The model of the relationships between Jesus and the faithful down through the ages are noted here – and **this is the same Trinitarian bond that exists between the Father and the Son**. While the accounts of the interchange between Jesus and His Flock might change, this Model remains as the possible ideal.

- **Vine**: ... 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love... [Jn 15]. This is no longer the theme of **mutual knowledge**, but rather than of **Trinitarian love**. Yet, the structure is the same. This structure aims at revealing an intimate parallelism between the action of the father with regard to His Only-Begotten, Most

Beloved Son, and that of the Son with regard to His Disciples. This parallelism does not involve only the action of the Father as a model for that of His Son – but, also, **it indicates the origin, source of the knowledge, of the love, of the Mission to which the disciples participate: all are Trinitarian!**

c. It can be concluded, then, that in our text, there is **an identity here, that of the sending the Disciples into His own Personal Mission and His own Mission received eternally from His Father.** In sending His Disciples, Jesus lets them have a share in the very mission that He received from His Father. As He sends them, it needs to be recalled that He **personally is the Father's Envoy.** This title is at **the heart of the Johannine Christology and His Christophany.** This exchange is most interesting: ... 28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be **doing the works of God?**" 29\* Jesus answered them, "**This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.**"... [Jn 6]. It is clear that in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, there have been also 'other envoys', above all **John the Baptist** [cf. 1:6]. However, Jesus is the **unique Envoy of the Father** in this sense - that He accomplishes the work of the Father [cf. Jn 4:32-35]. **He carries out His Will and work** all through His entire earthly sojourn, and **above all, on the Cross,** in this celebration of the Pasch that leads Him back to the Father.

d. The **first** use of this verb: **to send, envoyer,** indicates the Person, or the place towards which the person is sent, the one sent to a specific destination, by the Father – thus Jesus was **sent** into this world by the father, as a description of His Person [cf. **Jn 10: 36 do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'** ]. The **second** use of the same verb reveals the origin of the Mission, the Person by Whom one is being sent, the one to whom the mandate is addressed: Jesus is at the origin of the sending of His Disciples and of the Apostolic Mission which He confides to His Disciples in this moment. This seems confirmed in **Jn 1:**

... 19\* And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20\* He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21\* And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 They said to him then, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23\* He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." ...

This flows from **Jn 1:6-8:...** 6\* There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light...

e. The fact that Jesus is the One Who sends His disciples might be understood that with the second verb here in this verse of Jn 20, the One who sends is at the same time, the Model of the Apostolic Mission that is envisaged. The disciples will be therefore, invited to comprehend that **their mission will resemble that of Jesus** and **all need to ponder the Master in order to take from Him the proper orientations for the Apostolic Mission.**



f. The use of the perfect tense: .. **as the Father has sent Me...** , then followed by the present tense: **...now I send you ...** - reinforces this conviction. The perfect tense here indicates that His activity in the past has been continuing right up to this instant when the original Envoy utters these words. In entrusting this Personal Mission of His to His Disciples, Jesus is still active in His own Personal Mission from His Father. It can also be stated that the envoy of the Disciples makes up part of the Mission of Jesus and prolongs it. The resemblance of the times with v. 17 is evident: ... 17\* **Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."...**[Jn 20]. The verb **to ascend** in the perfect here is contrasted with the same in the present: **I am ascending**. There is a hint here of what is called the **kerygmatic perfect** – it is possible that in this v. 21 we already might have an example of this. It might also be concluded here that our passage is one that is characteristic with John: **As the Father has sent me...** - this seems to 'define' Him: [cf. **3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29 ; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25**]. Jesus constantly lives this vocation in His earthly life even up to , and including His testimony on the Cross. **I now send you ...** and this sending is accomplished in the word of the Risen Lord. Thus, **Jesus Himself being at the origin of the Apostolic Mission of the Disciples**, this makes theirs **one of the consequences of his ascending now to the Father**.

g. The motive of their 'being sent' is not explicit, as often is the case in the over-all reading of Jn. It is implied in the words of Jesus that fulfill the enterprise after the Last Supper: ... 20\* **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.**... [Jn 13]. This motif is clearly expressed in Jesus' prayer: **As You have sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world ...** [Jn 17:28]. This verse is not exactly reproduced in Jn 20: 21 even though the same verb appears. However, the sayings of Jesus describe quite well **the whole world as the field offered to the Disciples for their Apostolic Mission**. This Mission therefore is **a universal Mission, open to all**.

h. For completion's sake it would be helpful to ask also just who are these 'Disciples'. In Jn, this term designates not only 'the Twelve', but likewise all those who have been Jesus' 'own', His 'friends', and including His discreet friends, like **Joseph of Arimathea [19:38]**. With regard to our specific verse 21, however, the term seems more precise – **the Apostolic Mission handed on by the risen Lord is addressed only to the Apostles** [cf. Mt 28:19; Mk16:15; Lk 24:47; Ac 1:8]. **This is the unanimous NT testimony.**



### [II] THE GESTURE OF JESUS, THE SENDING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT [Jn 20:22]

**v. 22: ... And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit...**

a. The salutation at the beginning of v. 21 echoes that of v. 19. The opening of v. 22 takes up again v. 20. One might, then, legitimately think that it is a matter here that this is a redactional effect. The first illustration of the yearning for their **Peace**, this took place at the **manifestation of the sacred hands and pierced side of Jesus**. The second is the sending forth of the Holy Spirit, a kind of Johannine Pentecost. At any rate, the reference made to the **sacred pierced side of Jesus** [only noted by Jn] - prepares for the Gift of the Spirit.

b. This sending of the Holy Spirit is expressed by a verb, **Jesus breathed** on them. This verb is a *hapax legomena*, in that it only appears here in the gospel narrative, but the LXX has it 11 times. The examination of all these references sheds light the different meanings of the verb in the word of God. There are three separate meanings:

- **the first** is the Breath of the Creator. It is thanks to Him that God bestows on human beings, shaped by the material of the dust and given the **breath of life**. [Cf. Gn 2:7]. It is found again in Ezk's Field of the Dry Bones, in which the dead are restored to life [cf. Ezk 37:9, ff.]. It is lastly, in this same sense that recalls the struggle which directs the **Book of Wisdom** against the worship of idols. The one who makes the **pottery** is the image here: ... **11 because he failed to know the one who formed him and inspired him with an active soul and breathed into him a living spirit. ... [Ws 15]**. Evidently, this sense after what had been noted of the Gardener, and his relationship with the Book of Ezk, this seems to be what is behind the text in Jn. Furthermore, certain commentators have not ceased to consider this **breathing of Jesus onto His Disciples** to a **Creative Breath** which allows the renewal of each one.

- **the second sense** suggests the idea of a Restoration, of a **return** of an antecedent Being. The Prophet Elijah obtains the favor to return to life the only son of the **widow of Zarephtha** [1 K 17:11]. A Healing is also bestowed on **Tobias**, thanks to a remedy:

... 8 And as for the gall, anoint with it a man who has white films in his eyes, and he will be cured."... [Tb 6].

... 12 And when his eyes began to smart he rubbed them, 13 and the white films scaled off from the corners of his eyes... [Tb 11].

These aren't only individual healings, as there is also that of the entire people, restored after the total destruction heaped on them by the Assyrians [cf. Na 2:2] This **restoration of the People** was moreover prepared by the announcement of Good News, that of **Peace**. It therefore, has a physical aspect when it concerns the

human body – and a **symbolic meaning** when it foresees **the return of a people still in exile.**

- **the third sense** appears in the Book of Ezk. God announces through the mouth of His Prophet that He is going to manifest His fury on those very places where his people had been established:

... 17 And the word of the LORD came to me: 18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them, silver \* and bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace, have become dross. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20 As men gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire upon it in order to melt it; so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. 21 I will gather you and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it. 22 As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it; and you shall know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath upon you." ... [Ezk 22].

This Oracle against Israel is pronounced, as can be noted, in a context of **purification** and of **judgment**. God then reveals the sin of His People [Ezk 22:17] and predicts the time of **Jerusalem's purification** [Ezk 22:21-24]. It is **by His breath** that He will realize this purification and will manifest His Divine Wrath. Nonetheless, the message of the Prophet terminates on a note of hope, with his announcing the **restoration of Israel [37:9]**. This **eschatological restoration** is bound to **the Gift of the Spirit of life**, accorded to dried bones. It can be noted here, this final understanding of the verb **to breathe** does not exclude the other two meanings presented above. The purification from sins goes hand in hand with **the restoration**, and even with the **re-creation** [36:35]. **The purification of Israel is worked out** by the passage from death to life and permits **a total restoration of the People of God, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

c. This gesture of Jesus so powerfully inspired by the **Prophet Ezk [37:9, ff.]** is an echo of the gesture accomplished in the first Tableau on behalf of the Disciples As Jesus presided over the **Manifestation**, His own **Christophany**, He likewise dominates over the **work of recreation** which He confers on His Apostles in **giving them the Holy Spirit**. This work is an accomplishment of total hope for Israel, such **as the Prophets had already expressed in their re-reading of Creation.**

d. This analysis of the verb **to breathe** corresponds to that conception Jn has of the Holy Spirit. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus reveals to this Master in Israel that he must be born anew from on high:

... 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' \* 8\* The wind \* blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."... [Jn 3].

The image of this **New Birth** is moreover accompanied by a commentary which is **inspired by one of the elements of the Creation** in order to offer an accounting of

the role of the divine action. Likewise, at the end of the Discourse on the Bread of Life, it is the vivifying action of the Holy Spirit which is envisaged:

... 63\* It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life... [Jn 6].

e. This action of the Spirit is in the context of Jn 6 preceded by an incomplete allusion to the heavenly world of the Son of Man. It might be seen here in commenting on the response to Mary Magdalen in v. 17:

... 62\* Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? 63\* It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life... [Jn 6].

... 17\* Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." [Jn 20].

The normal conclusion would be that the return of the Son in glory lays open the implication of the Gift of the Holy Spirit:

... 37\* On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. 38\* He who believes in me, as \* the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" 39\* Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. .. [Jn 7]

If all this holds true, then the above noted Jn 20: 17 that prepares the way for the following v. 22, the **breathing forth of the Holy Spirit**. The announcement of Mary Magdalene to the Disciples [v. 18] has for its two-fold consequence the manifestation of the risen Lord [the 'Christophany'], but then also the Sending, the Gift, of the Holy Spirit.

f. The **Breath** of Jesus had been preceded by one word, and followed by another. The gesture is found commented on in the following manner: ***And He said to them... Receive the Holy Spirit!*** The verb in the phrase which introduces this **Gift of the Holy Spirit** is found in the present. It is identical to that which opened the salutation at the end of v. 19:... **"Peace be with you."**... This of course, is the historical present – Jesus' word is situated in the present of the salutation.

g. The verb to receive that Jesus uses here translates both the **acceptance of gifts** – (such as the **loaves** [6:11] - **garments, tunic** [13:12; 19:23], a **body** [19:40]) but also the gift of a **person, of Jesus Himself, His testimony, His word** [Jn 3:33; 17:8]. The Disciples are the ones who reserve a favorable welcome for their Master. He, in comforting them, promises them the Spirit before His departure:

... 16\* And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you... [Jn 14].

h. They know Him for He remains with them, and in them. The Spirit will bring them **knowledge of the glory of Jesus** for He will have communicated this to them, the One Whom they have received from Him:

... 14\* He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you... [Jn 16].

This **Gift of the Holy Spirit** had been promised by Jesus to His Disciples. This promise is being realized now in Jn 20 following the **welcome, the reception**, that the Disciples just reserved for the **Risen Lord**, The purpose of this Gift is three-fold:

- to insure that they will not be left as orphans [14:18];
- to provide them with access to the integral truth, in its entirety [16:13] – this means **a better knowledge of Jesus, the Father's Envoy**;
- and also to **convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment** ... [Jn 16:6].

This means, then that **the Spirit** as will be permitted as will be **the Disciples, to render their testimony of the One Whose lot they are to share and this from the beginning [15:27]**.

i. In the imperative, the verb had already been used in the account of Jesus' trial. Twice Pilate had sought to hand Jesus over to the Jews as they were His accusers. In putting the ball in their court [18:31], he had engaged them to express what was their deepest wish. They had judged Him, innocent though He truly was [19:4], yet they wanted His death [18:31; 19:6-7]. This rejection of the whole world had many times been indicated in the course of the gospel narrative. From the very outset, Jesus had explicitly made allusion to the non-acceptance of His testimony [3:11, 32]. And this comes back often as a kind of a refrain throughout the narrative. This **rejection of Jesus** is precisely the fundamental sin of His contemporaries, and of the world.

j. The **reception, welcoming of the Gift of the Holy Spirit** is therefore to be comprehended in this context of **refusal by some, and welcome by others, of the Person of Jesus**. This means that just as there were those who wanted to put Him to death, **an entire populace who refused His revelation** - there have also been those in good number, of the same race as He was, and also those from among the Greeks, as Philip and Andrew [12:21-33], who received, **welcomed Him this Easter Night**, a **New People of God**, charged with the Apostolic Mission to go out to the whole world, and they would be assisted by the Holy Spirit.

k. As allusion has often been made to the **Spirit of Truth** and to the **Paraclete**, by some contrast, the **title of the Holy Spirit** has been found only in two other places in Jn. At the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, **John the Baptist**, in speaking of Him, designates Him as ***the One who would take away the sins of the world*** [1:29] – and as ***the One Who baptized in the Holy Spirit***

[1:33]. The **Lamb of God** is a title which makes reference to the **Paschal Victim** [cf. Ex 12:46]. The presence of this title in the background of the Baptism envisaged by the Baptist, supposes the **remission of sins**. Now, in the verse at hand, the Paschal Gift of the Spirit announces that **sins are taken away** [Jn 20:21]. It is therefore possible that this **Gift of the Spirit** [v. 22] is to be considered as the **accomplishment of the Baptism** proclaimed by John the Baptist.

I. At the beginning of His Farewell Discourse, Jesus promises His Disciples:

... 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27\* Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you... [Jn 14].

As Revelation has been accomplished in the work of Jesus, it remains necessary, then, following His death, to watch to make sure that His word remains alive among the Disciples down through the ages. It is the Holy Spirit Who assumes this role. The Spirit prolongs forever, the presence of Jesus in them in the bosom of His community and assures the continuity of His Personal Mission from the Father. It is in effect His role to pursue the work of Jesus among the Disciples and, through them, into the whole world [15: 26, f.]:

... 26\* But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; 27\* and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning... [Jn 15].

It is part of the Father's Plan that after the presence of the Envoy has **consummated His Personal Mission** among the Disciples, Jesus bestows on them His Holy Spirit [Jn 20: 21, f.].

m. Between these texts and the one presently under discussion here, there is a difference: in v. 22 here, '**Holy Spirit**' appears without the definite article. Furthermore, as a result, there are certain interpreters here, who by reason of the **liturgical context**, have suggested that in connection with the **First Day of the Week**, the reception of the Holy Spirit is presented in a cultic dimension. It might be that the **Liturgical overtones** of Jn 7 [**the last and greatest day of the Festival**] the formula here might be a forerunner of Jn 20:

... 37\* On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38\* He who believes in me, as \* the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" 39\* Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified... [Jn 7].

The **Acts of the Apostles** confirm that we are in the presence of a formulation well known to the Early Church [cf. Ac 1:8; 2:33, 38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2].

n. The vocabulary of Jn 20:21 was characteristic of the Johannine language, and its structure is as well. As for v. 22, we have seen that the **Gift of**

**the Holy Spirit** corresponds well to the theology of the author of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel and it had been announced in particular in Jn 7: 39, as Augustine was early to note. However, the verb translates the gesture by which this Gift has been communicated is indeed a *hapax legomena*, in the NT. As for the verb which introduces this, it is many times found in Jn. The first reference, it seems, is that of the **act of New Creation** – then, the **restorer of the People** from Ezk's vision of the **Field of the Dry Bones** [Ezk 35:3, 5, 9].

o. Lastly, the **Trinitarian dimensions** stand out here: it can be noted that the **Apostolic Mission of the Disciples** engages at the same time, **the Father, Who is at the origin of the Son's Personal Mission**, but also this **Son Who confers His Mission on His Disciples** – and **the Holy Spirit Who is clearly present in this Mission**. This engagement of the most Blessed trinity was already predicted in Jn 3: ... 34 For he whom **God [the Father]** has sent **[Jesus Christ]** utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the **Spirit**... God alone indeed is capable of **re-creating, restoring humanity** - as **He alone has the Power to forgive sins**.



### [III] THE REMISSION OF SINS [Jn 20:23]

... 23\* **If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."**

a. This **bind/loose – forgive/retain**, is called a **disciplinary logion**. It seems More in accord with Mt:

... 19\* I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you **bind on earth shall be bound in heaven**, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven...".. [Mt 16]  
 ... 18\* Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven**... [M 18]

It might also approach aspects of the Lukan style:

... 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46\* and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47\* and that **repentance and forgiveness of sins** should be preached in his name to all nations, \* beginning from Jerusalem.... [Lk 24].

Today, an accord is made to affirm that this is a sign of inheriting a tradition, an inheritance which evidently the narrator has taken up because his formulation is adapted to 'public' Greek.

b. However, this 'borrowing' is not totally 'foreign' to Johannine theology which connects it to the **Gift of the Holy Spirit** unto the remission of sins. One notes in effect that by His coming, the **Spirit** is charged with : ... 8 **And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...** [Jn 16]. Thanks to the Apostolic Mission of the Disciples the Personal Mission of

Jesus is divinely destined to continue across the ages. Therefore, the revelation is offered to us, and those who refuse it find themselves unmasked. Present to this Apostolic Mission, the Holy Spirit confounds those who do not believe in the Divine Son, as they reject the Light and the Truth: **I am the way, the truth, and the Life!**

c. The substantive **sin** is often utilized in the Gospel, but in the plural it is employed only **two other times**:

- In the context of a controversy between Jesus and His contemporaries, He says to them: ... 24\* I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he."... [Jn 8]. Jesus thus teaches them that **the deliverance from death and from sin is attached to Faith in His Divine, Merciful Person**. He attests that outside of Him, no remission of sins is possible. Neither is there any remission of sins possible outside **the Holy Spirit, Whom He bestows on His disciples** at the end of this **First Easter day** we are studying in Jn 20.

- **the second use** of this substantive is situated at the end of the story of the Man born Blind. The Pharisees refuse to accept the testimony of the old blind man and they say to him: ... 34 They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out... [Jn 9]. This refusal is all the more dramatic than in the following verse, where **Jesus calls the blind man to faith in the Son of Man**, then He declares to the Pharisees: ... 41\* Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."... [v. 41]. Jesus notes at one and the same time their refusal and their resultant incapacity of removing sin, but He also works out a discernment here: between the **one who is considered as a sinner from birth**, and **those who reject His testimony**. Such as **these latter are the real 'sinners'** and their refusal of Him condemns them. The discernment that Jesus entrusts to His Disciples is therefore in the line of the One Who effects this in the course of His own mission.

d. These two references pertain to a context of controversies and the **appeal to the faith** in the One Who can **take away the sin of the world** [1:29]. Our verse does not pertain to a context of controversies, but rather to **the appeal of to the faith**, which will resurface at the end of the chapter [cf. vv. 29, 31]. The scholars feel that this seems to have been constructed in its final redaction that it might open up into a confession of faith announced from v. 8 on ward. The power to remit sins is granted to the Disciples in the heart of a narrative where **the appeal to believe** in the One Who comes to manifest Himself to them.

e. He has **manifested Himself** to them in showing them **His pierced side and wounded hands**, the signs of His Passion. These signs reveal the refusal of Jesus' contemporaries to **welcome, accept Jesus**, and this is the source of their sin. They allow one to comprehend the fear which animates the parents of the Man born blind, as that of the Disciples after the death of their Master [20:19]. But, this Master comes to **conquer death, fear** and He brings **the pardon of sins**. This is why the remission that He offers by the mediation of His Disciples is at one and the same **time a fruit of the Passion, of the Resurrection and of the Gift of the Holy Spirit**.



f. The **Gift of the Holy Spirit** is presented in the heart of the second Tableau. The **remission of sins** as the **Sending into the carrying on of His Personal Mission** both of this are literarily bound to the phrase, *having said this* [v. 22]. If this Gift is placed by the narrator in relation to the **sending by the Father, and that of the Son**, one might say that the remission of sins is ratified by God, through the guarantee of Heaven and the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

g. In our *logion*, the **remission of sins** precedes the **refusal of pardon to sinners**. In Mt, it is the inverse. The context is not evidently the same. But this presentation of our verse corresponds also to the theology of the author. In effect while Jesus strongly denounces sin of those who refuse to grasp His word, and who do not love God [cf. 5:37, 42], He clearly affirms that the Mission of the Son of Man is above all to save [cf. Jn 3]:

... 16\* For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17\* For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. 18 He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19\* And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21\* But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God."

h. The first verb, **to remit**, is also utilized in two other contexts. Jesus announces to His Disciples His departure and promises them that He will not leave them orphans [14:18]. A bit further on, He adds:

... 25 "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27\* Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid... [Jn 14].

The context of these two citations is at the same time, that of the **Mission of the Son** and the **Gift of the Spirit**. It is therefore identical for anyone in whom the Son accomplishes His Mission in bestowing the Holy Spirit and in remitting sins.

i. The second verb is a *hapax legomenon*, of the gospel narrative and the member of the phrase in which it is employed has no equivalent in the entire NT. It is however, used by the LXX, and especially in Ezk, in an **eschatological context** where the end of Israel is announced. The hour of its misfortune has sounded, it is the Hour where the wrath of God is going to be revealed:

... 10 "Behold, the day! Behold, it comes! Your doom \* has come, injustice \* has blossomed, pride has budded. 11 Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their wealth; neither shall there be preeminence among them. \* 12 The time has come, the day draws near. Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all their multitude. 13 For the seller shall

not return to what he has sold, while they live. For wrath \* is upon all their multitude; it shall not turn back; and because of his iniquity, none can maintain his life. ... [Ezk 7].

This misfortune is due to those sins denounced throughout Ezk 4-7. Our second verb, to **retain sins**, calls to mind **the sins of Israel**, and the **times of Expiation**, i.e., **the ruin of Jerusalem and the departure of the People into exile.**

j. The first verb: **to remit** – is utilized in an identical context in Ezk. The Prophet denounces the culpability of Jerusalem. He compares it to **adultery and to prostitution**. God hands over the Holy City to her lovers, and warns her of what lies ahead:

... 39 And I will give you into the hand of your lovers, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your fair jewels, and leave you naked and bare... [Ezk 16].

The time has come for Israel to pay the price for its sin, to bear the weight of her abominations. But, at the end of this chapter, god announces that He will call to mind His Covenant of Mercy, and that He will establish an **Eternal Covenant**, and will absolve His people from all the evil they have done:

... 60 yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. 61 Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I \* take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. 62 I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 63 that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD." ... [Ezk 16].

k. In the context of Ezk, these two verbs are used to denounce the sin of Israel. Through many faults and sin, the Prophet accuses the People of God of **betraying the love of God** and of **breaking the covenant concluded with Him**. It is the heart of Israel which is sick and has to be renewed. Her healing is announced by **the Gift of a New Heart, and new Spirit, that of the Lord Himself:**

... 25 I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26\* A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27\* And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances... [Ezk 36].

l. One might therefore conclude that **the Prophet Ezk plays a large role in the development of Jn 20**. God announces that **He will purify His People** - and, at the same time, **He will place within them His Spirit** in order to enable them to keep His Laws [cf. Ezk 36:25-27, 33]. There follows then the vision of **the Field of the Dry Bones** which culminates in **the resurrection of the People of God** thanks to the **Gift of the Breath of God, the Gift of the Holy Spirit** [cf. Ezk 37: 9, ff.] – referring back to **the original Creation**, Gn 2:7] – the Principle of **New Life** [Ezk 37:14].

m. This *rapprochement* is all the more justified that one can only be moved by this apparent parallel – even the words used are similar. This resemblance seems to indicate that the OT Prophet had truly inspired Jn 20. If this is the case, then the remissions of sins offered at the end of this 3<sup>rd</sup> Scene of Jn 20, announces the birth of a **New People** whose **heart God has healed** and which will announce, proclaim, continue **the New Covenant of Mercy initiated through the sacrifice of Calvary**. The **First-Born** of this people, of course, is Jesus Himself. As for the **New Community**, this is entrusted to those who have been with Him as **the Witnesses of His public life and eventual resurrection**.

n. While the remission of sins is bound to the Gift of the Spirit, it is also therefore the announcement of the accomplishment of the promises made centuries earlier to Israel. It is also the welcome, the reception, by the **New Israel** of the One who is the Father's Envoy. The **remission of sins** and **the gift of the Spirit** signify that a people has been rendered capable of welcoming revelation, of **believing in Jesus Christ** and to give **witness that He is the Lord**. For the moment these are the disciples who, after having seen Him, they **rejoiced** at His **being in their midst**.

o. By reason of the context to which the *logion* pertains, the power that Jesus bestows on His disciples can be summarized under a simple pardon of the faults, or to a simple sentence pronounced over the sinner. Since the remission of sins is the object of the Apostolic Mission of the Disciples, and this has for its primary cause, the Envoy of the Father, or as its model, **the Divine Son, Most Beloved and Only Begotten** - it is fitting to situate all this at the very heart of the **New Covenant realized in the Easter of Jesus**. This remission of sins is bestowed on the **evening of the First Day of the Week**, and in a context of **purification**, of **restoration** and of **re-creation**, it has an **eschatological dimension**. This operates a discernment between those who do not believe in the Son of Man and who are already condemned – and those who do believe in Him and who can indeed become children of God. The Gift of the Spirit announces that this reconciliation is definitively acquired and that all human beings can rediscover the pathway of fraternity thanks **to the Lord's ascending to His Father**.

p. The verbs are either in the aorist subjunctive, or in the present subjunctive, or in the perfect. The diversity of these times indicates that the power remitted to the Disciples at a precise moment is appealed upon to last for the entire period of the life of the Church. It seems to us, therefore, important to look to this Jn 20 and to see in it its **universalist perspective**, a destination that it might not have been fully grasped, but which is certainly the faith of the Church.

q. We have already said that the power to remit sins was entrusted to the **Disciples**. However, this word has not been explicitly mentioned in this entire second Tableau. This is astonishing in an account which does not hesitate to speak of them, It is without doubt an indication to think that this second Tableau is a secondary redaction and that it had been added to the first Tableau, in order to complete the ecclesial and pastoral dimension. However, there can be no doubt that in this actual account the two pronouns that are used, **you**, inscribed in v. 21 recall to mind those who were present at the end of v. 19. Now it is indeed a

question of the **Disciples** in this section where the word is employed at the beginning and at the end of the **manifestation of Jesus**. As for the personal pronoun, **them**, inserted in v. 22, this suggests that Jesus is addressing Himself still to those Whom He had known and chosen from the beginning of His ministry.

r. It remains for us still to take up a difficult question, the position of the Churches **regarding those to whom this power of forgiving sins was entrusted**. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches think that this power has been entrusted exclusively to the **Apostles**. The Protestant sects think that this power has been granted to every disciple of Christ, and not only to a particular group, led by Peter, and to the Twelve [cf. Lk 24:18]. It should be kept in mind that **Canon 10 of IInd Constantinople** had defined the restrictive interpretation taken up later by Trent and Vatican II.

s. The answer to this ecumenical question, needs to flow from the over all reading of this chapter, and to keep in mind the inter-personal relationships of the actors. Mary Magdalen is considered in the account as she who informs the Disciples. He announces to them that **someone has taken the Lord away from the tomb** - she lets them know that **the Master has risen**. She is therefore, a Messenger of the Paschal Event among the Disciples. She enjoys a role habitually attributed to the women in the other resurrection accounts.

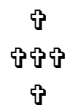
t. This role is not under-estimated by the narrator - as he dedicates to her one of the more beautiful NT scenes. But, this scene of recognition is ordained to the deliverance of a message to be brought to the Disciples. And Mary is '*consecrated*' in her role as messenger by Jesus Himself, Who sends her [v. 17]. Thus, Mary's role here that she exercises in this account seems well defined.

u. The Disciples, for their part, have returned to the Tomb. They go inside which **Mary does not do**. The interior of the Tomb is for them the place of a better understanding of the event and even a revelation of itself. They have likewise turned towards the Person of their Master, of the risen One, who is in the **midst of their group**. **Mary is not with them the night of the Pasch**. We can therefore conclude that the relationship between Mary and the Disciples is extremely tenuous. Each time that she delivers a message, but **one is never let in on the encounter with the Disciples**. Furthermore, this fact also brings out anew that **she is never with them in those special places they frequent**. She is not at the tomb at the same time that they are, and on that **Easter Night** **she is not seen to reappear**. **Her role is completed by dawn**.

v. If the narrator had tried to show that the Apostolic Mission had been bestowed on every believer, he surely would have been hard pressed to produce the evidence. Mary on that Easter Night simply was not there – her message to the Disciples can serve as some kind of a **Preamble to His manifestation of His Wounds**. It might also seem that she is not mixed in with the group, but is simply **the messenger who informs them**. We have to conclude, therefore, that **the actual group to which Jesus addresses Himself and confers the Apostolic Mission is a restricted group of just the Apostles**.

w. Not all agree with this, of course. The great difficulty is that Jn designates among the Disciples also the **friends of Jesus, like Joseph of Arimathia**. There were various individuals close to Jesus, a group much larger than the Twelve. Peter and John are also called **Disciples** [v. 24]. Yet, it is clear they are **Apostles**. It is not clear to all just who **the 'other Disciple'** is. The literary bond between the appearance to the Eleven in Lk [24: 36-53] and the appearance to the Disciples in Jn 20 does not fully satisfy all exegetes. It may be noted that the coming of the Risen Lord on that first Easter Night in Lk presents the Eleven and their Companions [Lk 24:33]:... **33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them...** Consequently, in Luke the appearance of Jesus Risen goes beyond the circle of the Apostles. It is true that the Johannine Tradition is not the Lukan tradition, but it seems to some interpreters that Jn 20 and Lk 24 would lead some at least to conclude that the Mission conferred on the **Disciples** to forgive sins is addressed to a group of men, among whom the **Apostles** hold the first place – **two among them are explicitly named** – and that **one of these, Peter, was the first to enter the Tomb**.

x. This group, it is clear, symbolizes the New Israel, the Church accomplishing its pastoral charge. But some argue here that this power is not restricted to the priestly order - a clearer understanding of which develops in the course of time. **[This is delicate material, and believers need to walk gingerly here]**.



## **CONCLUSIONS**

[1] Clearly, then, Jn 20 differs from the other accounts. It is composed of two Tableaus which appear as a conclusion to that which took place on **Easter Morn**. But, it must be added immediately that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tabelaue has been constructed on the first, having the same structure. It seems to be a secondary structure, as seems to flow from the composition. There are certain elements which are of the **Johannine style**, and others which come from the **OT**, and still others who have been **borrowed from the Tradition**.

[2] However, the two Tableaus resemble one another. At the center of each of them there is an event which clarifies, which reveals, which guarantees that which is going to be said and that which is going to follow. **The manifestation of His Hands and Pierced Side [the Christophany]** makes clear Jesus' arrival among His Disciples, and this allows them to recognize Him and this explains the source of their **Joy**. The **Gift of the Spirit** reveals to the Disciples that they are to carry out the **sacramental mission** entrusted to them. This guarantees the remission of sins from the Spirit, from the Risen one, through the ages in the Church.

[3] The two Tableaus have in common that they are **essentially Christological**. Jesus has entered into the **midst** of His Church, and He remains there. It is He Who acts, Who speaks, Who commands, Who bestows the power to forgive sin the reaction of the Disciples is known to us thanks to the Dialogue which the narrator presents and engages his reader. This **Christocentrism** appears equally in His relationship to His Father and in the Gift of the Spirit: Jesus intervenes as Mediator, He recalls the origin, the cause of the Apostolic Mission and the transmission of the Gift of the Spirit.

[4] It is also an **ecclesiological** account. The coming of Jesus in the midst of His Disciples recalls the scene at the beginning of the Passion [18:2]. It is in effect the last time that Jesus has appeared in their company. Yet, at the Resurrection on Easter Night, the Group has re-formed. It is thanks to the coming of Jesus that a Body of Disciples comes into existence and it is to the Apostles that the Mission is entrusted. The Spirit is given for the remission of sins. The Church appears before her lord as a **New People** who listens to Him, sees Him, welcomes, receives Him, and finds itself sent into the world, according to the specific charisms of each. In Jn 20, this power is bestowed on the **DISCIPLES** – however:

... According to Mt & Mk, Jesus celebrated the Passover Meal, with the Twelve [Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17] – and according to Lk, with the Apostles [22:14]. For Lk, however, the Apostles were a technical term reserved for the Twelve [6:13]. Even though John speaks about the DISCIPLES of Jesus, rather than explicitly about the TWELVE, or the APOSTLES, he applies this term consistently and exclusively to the Twelve after the occurrence of the crisis that followed the Eucharistic discourse [66-71]:

... 66 After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. 67 Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" 68\* Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." 70\* Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" 71\* He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him...<sup>111</sup> [Jn 6]

[5] The second Tableau seems to be a complement to the first. If in the first one, the Victory over Death and the Fear of the Apostles stand out, it is necessary to wait for the end of the second tableau in order to know explicitly that sins can be remitted. At the same time, in the first Tableau, consecrated to the recognition of Jesus by His Church, in the second tableau, there is the formal conferral of the Apostolic Mission, according to a classic outline of the account of the Risen Lord.

---

<sup>111</sup> Roch A. Keretszty, O. Cist., *Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical and Systematic Perspective*. Chicago/Mundelein Il. Hillenbrand Books 2004, p. 24

[6] Lastly the literary composition of the scene tends to indicate the Gift of the Spirit to this **New People of God**, represented by the Apostles, is less a Pentecost in the Lukan sense of the term, than it is an **Easter scene**. Jesus has come to live eternally. **Jesus bestows His Spirit on the entire world in dying, ex-spiring** [Jn 19:30] – the **Gift of the Spirit** is a parallel scene at the **resurrection to new life**. The Gift of the Spirit is to be identified with the sending of the Spirit announced in the Discourse of Farewell by Jesus. In this He confers on His disciples His **peace, joy, the mission, the Spirit and the revelation of forgiveness and the conferral of the power to do this**.

