

JESUS THE LIBERATOR OF DESIRE

Reclaiming Ancient Images

by

DOM SEBASTIAN MOORE

1. A Theory of Human Development

HUMAN infancy is shaped by two pulls: the oceanic pull of the womb, and, in tension with this, the growing sense of being separate. Oneness and separateness are in a tension that will exist until our death. In this tension, out of it, the ego forms. I think of the pearl forming in the oyster shell through the interaction of the shell with the tender flesh. I am using the word 'ego' much more loosely than Freud, to mean any sense of myself as individual.

But the ego of childhood is only a first form of ego. With it established, the original tension will reassert itself and demand a fuller resolution. In adolescence, the pull of oneness will be felt again, with new and bewildering force, in the form of sexual passion, and a new ego-form will have to be arrived at.

In the course of life, a person who continues to grow will have to go through many such reassertions of the tension. The crises of life, whether of falling in love, undergoing conversion, suffering bereavement or a host of other eventualities, all present the painful and bewildering demand that the person die to the existing ego-form and into a new interaction of the two great constitutive forces, of oneness and separateness. The person dies into a fuller selfhood, that is to say, a reconciliation, at a deeper level, of 'being myself and no one else' with 'being one with the pervading mystery'. The pneumatic or spiritual breakthrough that became Israel is an enormous advance in this direction. For it is the discovery of personal freedom (from all the cosmic forces, the gods) in oneness with the transcendent whole. In Jesus we shall see the fullness of this development.

Now we have to be more specific about this forming of ego out of the tension of oneness and separateness. It is not to be conceived of as a compromise between the oceanic bliss and the harsh reality of finite existence. The whole idea of life as a compromise, as a coming-to-terms with a harsh reality, as a reconciling of contradictories as best one can, is the negative heritage of Freud and many other makers of the modern mind. In reality, the oceanic feeling and the feeling of separateness are mutually advancing.

A person in love was never more himself, never more absorbed by the all-embracing mystery of being alive.

This mutual enhancing of oneness and separateness is desire. For desire is the allure of the whole felt as the life of the individual. It is the relatedness that I am, happening. And it wants to happen at deeper and deeper levels, as the creative tension of oneness with separateness seeks ever deeper levels at which to happen.

Now this progressive deepening of the creative tension of oneness with separateness is what is happening through the progressive growth-crises of our life. A new kind of desire will be only partially understood in the way of thinking that I am leaving behind. I shall understand that I want this or that object. But I shall not understand the new reality, the new interaction of what I call 'me' with strange new feelings. I try to love this person in the old way, and it does not work. D. H. Lawrence says of his Christ awakening sexually, 'he was absorbed and enmeshed with new sensations'. One of the puzzles of falling in love is that desire is not only fastening on a new object but finding a new subject. Intrinsic to the excitement of 'you' is a new 'me'. The new 'me' is trying to form out of a new experience of the tension between the oceanic and the finite. In the experience of falling in love, a person senses the real ground of selfhood, which is not 'this solid me' but the dynamic interplay of the two forces supporting the ego rather as a ball is supported by the jets of a fountain. How often counselling sessions bog down because the client is unable to say what he or she wants, the clarification of desire being contingent on the emergence of a new self. 'Who am I?' and 'What do I want?' — these questions exist in a dialectic that is in the nature of growing selfhood. It can be most frustrating.

Thus the growth of a person is the progressive liberation of desire. It is the process whereby desire finds ever more deeply its subject, comes to be in one who can say, ever more deeply and wholly, 'I want'. This process goes from the first cry of infant desire to the final liberation of desire in union with God. We move from the oceanic unknowing bliss to oneness with the *mare pacifico*, as Catherine of Siena calls the Godhead. Desire is fully liberated when a person comes to the deepest self, where identity is found in the God in whom we 'live and move and have our being'.

This notion of desire in search of a subject as well as drawn by an object fits into the mystical tradition. The practice of imageless prayer is a clear instance of the deliberately starved mind giving permission to the oceanic to set up a deeper dialogue with one's separateness. Contemplative prayer, like falling in love and once described by Abbot Chapman as 'an idiotic state', is desire opening 'at both ends' — toward an object, and toward being a subject in a way I don't understand. I do not know who I am with the alluring

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unknown. The liberation of desire is not 'getting what I want' but 'coming to want as ultimately I am'.

The whole practice of psychoanalysis can find its ratio in this notion. For psychoanalysis, whether Freudian or Jungian, consists in giving permission for desire as I do not yet know I have it and that parades before me in the at first incomprehensible form of dreams, to become mine. Dream analysis opens up the 'this end', the subject end, of desire. And, of course, Jung's concept of the self as distinct from the ego refers to the ultimate intentionality of the process, to who is emerging with the progressive liberation of desire, to who is becoming able to say 'I'.

The development of desire is a progressive changing of what is desired and who is desiring. That which demands and shapes this changing is the trust-relationship with the mystery in which we live. The need to change and grow is the need of this dialogue to deepen. And the need for this process to come to *full* transformation stems from the ultimacy of the mystery that initiates it. For the finite to become one with the infinite is a total transformation. Human identity is in the mystery that we call God. We become who we are to the extent that this mystery is working on us, changing us. And perhaps we are at a watershed in western culture, when the self as isolated monad is breaking down, the self-in-mystery revealing itself as who we actually are. And what pain lies for us between the world that is dying and the one that is to be born!

That which changes, with each growth crisis, is the way in which the abiding tension between the oceanic and the sense of separateness is being currently lived, in other words my present ego, who I am now behaving as though I were. The growth-crisis is a bewildering shift in this balance, demanding renegotiation. Disaster challenges me to re-personalize. Dr Zhivago, wandering down a country lane wondering how to deal with two incompatible sexual commitments, is seized by a small Red Army contingent and put to work with their wounded for the ensuing years. The incident is integral to the depth of faith in that book.

Now this growth process has a structure that suggests where it is headed: namely, with each new development, the oneness pole and the separateness pole come closer together. With adolescence and first love, one is drawn into the mystery of life in a physically exciting and disturbing way *and* one has a new feeling that 'nobody knows what it is like to be me'. And in the later crises, of bereavement and impending death, identity has to be found no longer in the career, the family or 'public life', but only within the all-engulfing mystery. This suggests that the whole thing is headed toward a convergence of oneness and separateness, what Hegel calls the identity of identity with non-identity. And this raises the

question, that regularly comes up in class: Is this point reachable in this life, or is it only at death? Is it in fact the interior of death itself?

The answer surely has to be 'Both'. It is unsatisfactory to think of our life simply as headed toward death, and yet we cannot ignore the revelatory, decisive character that death has in our psychic perspective. Both in this life, then, and in death. This was the occasion of my 'insight of the year', if not of the decade. If Christianity is God telling us in Jesus Christ who we truly are, we should expect Jesus to show the full human meaning, the convergence point, both in this life and in death. He does so, in fact, in a gesture that is the central act of Christian worship, identifying himself with food and drink and thus ritualizing his *death of ego* into the community, and he identifies this food and drink with his body crucified and his blood poured out. The supper-cross connection, which is the hinge of Christianity conjoining the ritual with the ethical (the two halves that came apart with the Reformation), is the realization by Jesus of the this-worldly and the eschatological topology of the convergence of oneness and separateness. One of my nightmares is saying sentences like this to my sister!

But Jesus's conjoining of the death of ego into community with his death on a cross is not simply the conjoining of death in this life with death itself. The 'death itself' pole bears a special relationship to what is called the sin of the world, so to this sin of the world we now have to turn.

2. *The Sin of the World*

And you will, I am sure, have felt a certain unreality in the picture of human life so far proposed. Is spiritual growth, with its progression of ego-deaths, what is happening out there? Or in here? A psychologist friend said to me recently, 'We people in the psychology business tend to come up with general theories about what's going on in people's lives. But we predicate our theories on the people we treat. And people who go into therapy suffer from an excess of humanity! The vast majority of people are quite unaware that they are being manipulative and exploitative.' Yes, it is certainly naïve to assume that normally people (we ourselves) are meeting life's challenges and growing, that marriages are deepening, that societies are seeking reconciliation and healing. The spiritual norm is the empirical exception.

Now it is not enough to say that people tend not to grow. It is very important to offer a reason for this, other than negligence or perversity. Christian tradition has a name for the spiritual inertia that is woven into the human condition over and above personal

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sin: original sin. And there is a psychological theory gaining ground today that does come close to describing psychologically the condition that we know theologically as original sin. What this theory is describing is a systematic societal repression in people of the 'true self': the true self that does trust life, that does want to know and to grow, that does 'desire to desire more', in other words the self as I have been talking about it. Such a psychological theory, if valid, will help us to understand why the desire to grow in desire, though in the deepest sense normative, is not the empirical norm.

The theory I refer to is that of Alice Miller. In her three books, *For Your Own Good*, *The Drama of the Gifted Child* and *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*, she lays bare the following dynamic. The infant needs to see himself or herself in the mother. The ego, we have seen, is the balance between oneness and separateness. The infant is drawn into oneness with the mother through seeing *itself* in the mother, and this fascination is held in balance by the growing sense of its separate existence. It is important to understand that this balance is not a compromise. The sense of separateness allows the infant to enjoy himself in the mother-mirror without getting lost in it — to enjoy *himself* there. Now if the mother won't let him *be* separate but holds him to her as a *mirror to herself*, then he is not free to enjoy himself in her. Thus he learns to crush the self in which he should delight, to crush it not only in himself but in the people he meets in later life. Aristotle's insight, that love for another is based on ordered love of self, appears here in a negative form. The prime disorder in self-love is the repression of the self in the name of a parent identity that the child cannot afford to be without, and this disorder infects all the person's relationships. The brilliant insight of Alice Miller is that what the client sees in the analyst is not the parent but the child he/she has to repress. She has a strong claim to have laid bare our worst vice, the *libido dominandi*, in its origins. We do unto others what, long before we could do anything about it, was done unto us. I call this 'the leaden rule', that questions the golden rule as Hopkins's 'leaden echo' questions the 'golden echo'. We are the prisoners of our parenting far more profoundly than we realize. Miller tells the story of a woman client, a very intelligent person, who, just as the therapy was beginning to work, took to telephoning her in the small hours of the morning to report on her dreams. Together they discovered that the root of this unreasonable behaviour was that when she was a little girl her father, an actor, used to wake her up on returning from a performance early in the morning not ready for sleep, and make her entertain him.

But why is the child deprived of sufficient narcissistic satisfaction? According to Miller, it happens because having a child reminds the

mother — and the father — of her own partially unsatisfied mirror need in childhood, so that she sees in the child the mirror to herself. As a result the child's vital impulse to see and enjoy himself in the mother-mirror is made to feel shame, because his 'real' duty appears to be that of fulfilling mother's expectations. This may be the origin of shame, a quality as fundamental as it is ignored by psychology.

The result is that we do not enter fully into the mirror-phase, the first ego-phase. Now this is crucial. *Because we do not enter into it fully, we are reluctant to go beyond it.* It is difficult to leave the house that one is still trying to build. So we spend our lives, in part, taking care of an ego that did not get off to a sufficiently lively start. Of course, some people are luckier than others. But society as a whole, with its enormous interdependence and dependence on past generations, will surely reflect this arrest, through insecurity, at the early ego-stage. Certainly our society does, and massively. The whole world of the mass-media, especially in advertising, is a systematic perpetuation of the infant mirror phase, inviting us to identify ourselves by the right car, the right clothes, the right people, the right body-contours, the right cosmetics, the right Scotch. We are surrounded with a forest of what a friend of mine calls identity posts. Christopher Lasch's book, *The Minimal Self*, is a very profound socio-cultural analysis on these lines.

In pointing so searchingly and poignantly to a system of deprivation that, by definition, goes back from generation to generation, Miller has offered a psychoanalytic parable of original sin, and a more potent one than the Oedipal parable of Freud. We are locked into a permanence of early ego, using others as mirror to ourselves, doing to others in the subtlest ways what was done to us in our beginning by parents who had it done to them. 'It was a dark and stormy night. . . .'

This permanence of early ego, which tends to be the social norm, can obviously take many forms. The constant factor is that basic childhood needs, for attention and for seeing oneself in the mirror of others, are still being supplied. The house out of which one should be moving on life's journey is still being built, splendid extensions built on. What is properly regarded as the steering wheel comes to be the compass. When people say that the problem with politics is ego, what they mean is not that there is something the matter with ego, without which we could not survive. They are referring to ego-still-having-to-be-built-up. And it is ego as compulsively self-securing that makes to seem quite unreal the long journey of transformation. This is what I shall be referring to as arrest at the early ego phase. It is an imperviousness to what life is really about, and as such deserves the name of sin.

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Once we have built-in the Miller factor in all its tragic intensity — with an eye to a pessimistic view that ‘ninety per cent of families are dysfunctional’ — we shall see that the effect of Jesus on his disciples and on the Church that they will become is *not only* the transforming of our finitude by the infinite but also the reversing of a millennially inherited tendency to deny to this transformation any reality, to identify ego with reality. We shall be able to understand anew, in terms of our psychological self-knowledge, the age-old insight that our salvation has two dimensions, that of transforming and that of healing. As we shall see, the healing dimension of the Resurrection is forgiveness of the disciples for letting Jesus down, while the transformation dimension is their understanding why *he* had to let *them* down, namely to bring them to the fullness of ego-death that the final transformation involves.

3. *A Psychology of Jesus*

How does the foregoing help us to construct a psychology of Jesus? First and foremost, we must be clear that the centre of such a psychology is something strongly documented by the gospel texts and recognized by scholars of religion of all stamps — indeed often more by non-believing scholars than by Christian theologians: namely a sense of being the intimate of God that is unique in its continuousness, its presumptiveness of divine presence, its giving rise to a tone of authority in what he says, an authority often claimed for himself overtly — ‘Amen Amen I say to you’. This, and not scholastic speculation, is surely the source of the notion that Jesus had the beatific vision, an opinion whose theological note is *sententia certa*. The notion is most uncongenial to us today, and even for the scholastics it created the problem of how a person could be, while still *viator*, *comprehensor*. And yet this notion of *anticipation* as characterizing Jesus would sit well with the notion of the convergence of oneness and separateness as something to be realized in this life. Jesus, as the new and normative humanity, could manifest this anticipatory quality to a unique degree. The passionate nature of his teaching on the reign of God, his persuasion of its imminence even to the point of being mistaken, argues in this sense. Jesus lived in the climate of the consummation of history, which is the final, eschatological convergence of human oneness with human separateness, of the all-absorbing mystery with the infinite varieties of culture, the vision of all humanity and all being as one in God. He is the luminous anticipator of the end of humankind. And with regard to the objection that this dehumanizes Jesus, Fred Crowe made the wry comment some years ago that the Hebrews text, ‘like us in all things

but sin', tends to be put to use in a farouche and indiscriminating way. Jesus was not a bit like us when he said 'It was said of old . . . but I say. . .'.

I can see this 'God-anticipating' quality in Jesus not as overriding any credible psychology, but on the contrary as human psychology cleared, free of its huge sinful encumbrance, and thus moving straight towards an end already consciously present to it, shedding ego-versions on the way, dying progressively through rejection and mounting tension toward — *not just* death on a cross, but his own inner death into God and into humanity in God.

It seems to me that a real updating of the tradition will attend to the mystery of personhood as Lonergan does when he distinguishes between subject and subjectivity, or between person and personality, or between two senses of identity. This seems to amount to the evocative distinction, central to Hinduism, between *le soi et le moi*. Jung points the way, when he finds the self to be transempirical, in the nature of a supratemporal destiny. When we think this way, the supratemporality of Christ seems to be *completing* something, making something dark to be light. Perhaps the notion of Jesus as the perfect human being is only reductionist in so far as the profound mystery of the human being is not understood. And does not the notion of the human as enigma show the *probability*, as opposed to the *necessity*, of sin, thus allowing sin to show itself without falling into the trap of deriving it as a logical necessity? And does not the tragic dimension of history, become nearly unbearable in our time, point toward this Godhead *manqué* that becomes lucid in a Godhead *achevé*. It seems to me that Christology should be an insistence, nearly unbearable in our time, on the divinity in the human, recalling Eckhart's statement that the self is a scintilla of Godhead, as mysterious as the Godhead itself.

On the contrary, a low Christology is anything but contemporary. Rather it is extending to Christology the declension from self-understanding that is the worst of our time. So much for 'crossing the Rubicon' in deference to a dreary committee ecumenism. I do not think Christology is now possible aside from a mystical self-understanding of humanity. Otherwise we get what Philip McShane has called a Christology from below downwards. Perhaps real Christology after Auschwitz will be one that can look straight at the horror of God in man with Christ, the focus of this, denied.

An interesting conversation I had recently comes to mind. It was with a young (c. 35) Jewish psychoanalyst who also teaches Buddhist meditation. He spoke of the liberation experienced in coming into touch with a life beyond ego. But then, he said, one senses that something is being treated as non-existent: namely the very temporal self, the self that, far from being a continual

ephemeral illusion, is the same as the one I remember as far back as memory will go. This too is real, and a philosophy that finds it fundamentally unreal must be defective. The thought occurred to me that the *simultaneous reality* of the timeless self and of the temporal, historical, political self, is what we are seeing in its fullness when we contemplate the psychology of Jesus: contemplate it with our whole Christological history, Scriptural, Conciliar, Patristic, Scholastic, the latter shepherded by Lonergan into modernity, in mind. What the Council Fathers experienced as a logical problem of person and nature, what the Scholastics sought to understand in terms of a metaphysical psychology, what Lonergan understood in terms of the existential difference between subject and subjectivity, can burst upon us as we struggle to unite our timeless depths with our temporal reality. In these terms, I think I can talk, as I shall be doing, of Jesus as identifying himself with the universal, universally denied self, and presenting it historically to be crucified: which is how the reversal at the pivotal moment of Lonergan's 'law of the Cross' happens, as we shall see.

4. Interaction between Jesus and the World

At the centre of the gospel story is Jesus's intimacy with God, Jesus with his Abba. This intimacy controls the life of Jesus, and makes of it a daily dying of ego into self. In this process, he is becoming who we all in essence are, the self whose separateness is identical with oneness. But this true self in us is desired yet dreaded. Schooled early in its rejection in favour of a learned, social self that bears all the biases and blindness of our world, it becomes a threat to us, though still desired. So in becoming this true self, under the continuing impulse of the Spirit and the presence of the unknown as Abba, Jesus is coming to embody the self in all of us, desired and dreaded. Implicit, then, in his position is the crisis in which the centring on him of all our desire and fear will demand resolution, the fear finding its outlet in crucifixion, so that the desire may be liberated into our at last becoming who we are, the children of God — though this liberating conclusion must be absent from the mind of him who, still limited to his individual self, will only in resurrection be in very truth the self of all humankind.

Thus Jesus progressively understands his intimacy with God as constituting him the sought-after and feared self of human beings. And thus the dying of ego that is his daily life, as it was the daily life of Socrates, is, like the life of Socrates, a dying that will eventually issue in death at the hands of men. The difference from Socrates consists in, first, the far fuller differentiation of God from the world that characterizes Judaism, and, secondly, a unique

intimacy with this differentiated, awesomely other God. Jesus experiences himself as the loved and hunted self of humankind, with far greater intensity than could Socrates. For in his very knowing of God he knows himself as victim, the victimhood the implication of the intimacy.

It is this *being* the self that humanity must reject, it is the entering on suffering and eventual death at the hands of a humanity that is exercising thereby its own self-hatred, that makes of this dying a descent into hell. For it is to *be* the being that we turn away from and then turn on. So the death undergone is the death that sin intends, the non-being that sin is. So Paul can say 'Him that knew no sin, God made sin for us, so that we might become the justice of God (that is, our true self) in him'. It is only *because* he 'knows no sin', has unimpeded intimacy with God, that he can be *made* sin, become the one in whom the drama of our self-rejection can be acted out.

Thus how the death of ego expands into death on a cross is that the death of ego releases the true self into being the target of the will to non-being, his physical annihilation the enactment of our spiritual self-annihilation, of the death that cannot be seen except in its ongoing destruction of the human world. As the rejected self of sinful humanity, he descends into hell. And even he could not know the intention of this death and descent, this co-operated-in self-annihilation of humanity, until he was raised from the dead and could enlighten his followers. 'Did not the Christ — the true self, child of God — have to suffer — at the hands of the social self — and so enter into his glory?'

Telescoping all this in scholastic terminology, the cognitive immediacy of God to the earthly Jesus had to work through all its earthly implications in a sinful world, to come into itself as the vision of God into which all are drawn.

Jesus — again unlike Socrates — was not without a cultural 'rôle-model' for the destiny on which he was set. The Suffering Servant of the great Servant Songs in Isaiah, with which he most probably identified himself, gave a pattern. The importance of a valid psychology of Jesus is that it gives us an authentic human *subject* for this identification. To say that Jesus saw himself in the role of the Suffering Servant of Jahve, and leave it at that, is to lay him, and all Christianity, open to the charge of masochistic self-evasion, a charge that Nietzsche pressed very powerfully. We have to be able to say *what it was* in Jesus that led him to this self-imagining, and to show this interiority in Jesus as implied in his sense of being the one to whom God was immediate.

Nietzsche found Christianity despicable, because he heard it saying 'Live in this world, and if this world destroys you, accept

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that. Life and unlife, both are good. You can invest in life for all you are worth, and when the investment crumbles, that too you can accept. At the crucial moment, you can go into reverse.' What is lacking in this version of Christianity is the middle term between living and dying at the world's hands, in which living obeys the critical exigency for its fuller realization, namely the collapse of my present world, a collapse in which, once the larger life has emerged, it will rejoice: that is to say, the death of ego which, far from being resignation, is the very nerve of expanding life.

It is not in an act of resignation, of self-reversal, of 'I can go that way too!', of forgetting the previous life-investment, that Jesus embraces the Cross. It is in the full dying of ego which, in the case of one uniquely intimate with the wholly beyond, has to suffer what essentially separates this world from God, that Jesus embraces his death sentence and its carrying-out. He has to *be* the self that we destroy in our fear of the ultimate intimacy that we desire.

Nietzsche goes for the jugular vein of Christianity, which is ego-death in its relationship with the death-dealing event. In the luminous figure of Jesus, that relationship is all that can be meant by love, since it weds the sufferer to the suffering of the crucifier, and thus, as we shall see, mediates the supernatural solution to the problem of evil. Outside that light, it is the smiling self-betrayal, the 'outward shine, the inward whine', that Nietzsche so despised. If David Tracey is right, and Nietzsche is the only serious challenge to Christianity, then the relationship between ego and self, between who I now think I am and who really is I, that provides the grammar for the death of ego, is an unavoidable theme for theological study.

The above is how I would understand Lonergan's 'law of the Cross'. It begins 'Sin leads to death'. This does not refer, so far as I am concerned, to the notion that death is the result of original sin, which creates nothing but problems (and which the Greek Fathers are not preoccupied by). It means that sin intends death, intends non-being, is self-undoing. The resolution is the loving self-identification of Jesus with the self in its undoing, to rise from the dead as the self that embraces us and that we embrace.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that, while the key to Jesus and his saving power is the identity between the death of ego and death inflicted, we have to be more explicit about the death inflicted. Certainly it is inflicted out of fear against the free person — and I have not got much further than this in teaching undergraduates. But something much deeper still remains unprobed by this way of putting it. This something is the essential meaning of sin. The meaning is implicit in the way I understand Alice Miller. For it is our denial of who we are, the rejection of the true self — her phrase incidentally, she is a lot further along than Freud — in

favour of survival in the socially learned self. The full theological description of this denial is a certain will to non-being. Now this will to non-being is as dependent on God for its meaning as is the radical consciousness of Jesus. And Jesus's sense of his uniqueness by reason of his immediate knowledge of God is shadowed for him by awareness of a world without this immediate knowledge, and he knows that he is as he is *for* that world. And *there* is the law of the Cross globally inscribed in his psyche. It is his destiny to *be* the true God-self that it is the sin of the world to deny, to be this self in a unique act of empathy or love that will, in the total process of crucifixion and resurrection, enable us to awaken to the love that God is and thus effect the only possible reversal of the will to non-being that permeates all societies and finds expression in all cultures.

The key to this self-identification with the world-denied self is the unique knowledge Jesus has of God. I can't exactly demonstrate this. Heuristically, Jesus's relationship to people is *that* relationship in which one who is *all* that a human being is (by reason of an anticipated eschatological relationship with ultimate meaning) would stand to all human beings. By way of an answer, I suggest that this is the relationship of being that in all people that all are involved in denying, namely the 'true self', the real victim alike in women forced into prostitution and men doomed to uphold an inhuman law.

So it is Jesus's uniquely immediate knowledge of God that differentiates his redemptive death from Socrates's redemptive death — this, beyond the crucial difference between the Jewish and the Greek cultures in which these two deaths are respectively set. In Jesus alone, the two poles of consciousness are the death of ego and the sin-intended death that he is to undergo as the self that sin essentially denies. Let me expand on this.

If we consider the whole complex of human relations that stem from the fundamental self-rejection that is the human canker, we find that they are relations of domination. Hegel's master-slave paradigm comes to mind. And Marx's failure to remedy the oppression of the proletariat other than by oppression by the proletariat is well-attested and lamented. In this situation, we are powerless, except to say what should not be and what should be. These 'shoulds', that can be expressed as laws, fail to go to the root of the trouble, the self-rejection that makes us want to prove ourselves against each other. What we see happening in the life, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is that these laws for human equality, these express wishes, fully reveal their powerlessness in the destruction of the true self that they have sought to empower, but since the true self freely enters this victim state a reversal takes

place that is only mysterious in the sense that the human depths are mysterious-depths intuitively known by Martin Luther King when he said, in the great speech, 'I have always believed that undeserved suffering is redemptive'. Undeserved suffering is the suffering at the heart of all sin, the suffering of the self of which sin is the rejection. The person who suffers undeservedly is the person who finds himself playing the role of true self, the universally rejected.

What comes into play in this reversal is called by Lonergan 'the law of the Cross'. But the meaning of 'law' is radically transformed. The word is still appropriate, for a law is a description of a process that can be repeated and, with each repetition, shows the same features. It is a law, for instance, that without ordered self-love there cannot be friendship. 'Law' means that what happens has a shape. The law of the Cross transmutes the 'old law', meaning law doing what it can with a human situation radically beyond it, into the 'new law', of which Aquinas says that it cannot be written down since it is 'the grace of the Holy Spirit', the resurrection fruit of the Passion of Christ.

But it has to be asked: Why does the coming-into-play of this law of the Cross involve the unique status that Christians acknowledge in Jesus? The answer, I think, lies in the immediate mutual implication, in Jesus's self-understanding, between being one for whom the Godhead is immediate and being destined, in his perfection and as his perfecting, to be the rejected in all self-rejection, the true self in the flesh. The *destining* of God's intimate as victim is a divine order, a divine making-explicit of the human condition in all its mystery, in all its desperation, in all its perversity.

But start thinking of this divine order no longer in the texture of the luminous psyche of Jesus but as a stern divine requirement that Jesus has to fulfil, and you have the barbaric understanding of the Redemption that has done so much damage, and that still appears in the Latin version of Eucharistic Prayer 3, happily mistranslated from paganism in the Latin to Paulinism in the English. I was horrified to discover that 'See the victim whose death has reconciled *us to yourself*' (that is, we were the problem, not God) is in the original *Respice victimam cuius immolatione placari voluisti*. 'See the victim by whose immolation you wished to be placated!'

This is just one more instance of the need to find a psychological base, a base in interiority, for all the classic statements of Christian belief. The lamb that was slain, the blood that saves, the flesh and blood that we eat and drink, the Suffering Servant of Jahve, the innocent one that God made sin for us, the only Son not spared as Isaac very nearly was not spared — the whole Christian chamber of horrors, is in reality the poetry of God, to be heard only by the awakened soul — and not stored in the attic while well-intentioned

catechists do what Eliot said Christianity is always doing, changing itself into something that can be believed, on Ronald Knox's basis, 'how much will Jones swallow?'

Looking back on the previous efforts of my mind to get round the saving Passion, I see a wobble between exploring the mind of Jesus and exploring the experience of his disciples. I am beginning to see now that these are not really alternatives. The sense of an 'intended' violent death that clarifies itself in him as he grows through the progressive deaths of ego with increasing incomprehension of people and failure of the mission, communicates itself to them through the medium of prediction by him and repression of what they hear; so that what explodes in them when the prediction comes surprisingly and brutally true *is* the mystery of *his own* weddedness to the violent end. It blows the ego apart with the peculiar force of his mystery, so that it is *his* mystery that becomes saving truth in them when, come to his fullness and knowing, as *he* could not know before, the meaning of the horrible event, he becomes present to them as reconciliation, love, joy and empowerment. It was an experience that they had been privy to that underlay the assertion that one in the form of God took the form of a slave and thus came into the glory of the name above all names. The law of the Cross, inscribed in the soul of Jesus, wrote itself by an ominous contagion in the souls of his followers, to erupt into triumphant affirmation when they were brought from this death into his life.

Thoroughly psychologized with an adequate God-centred psychology, the redemptive process is found to be in line with the oldest and strongest tradition. The tradition is that Jesus saved us on the Cross in virtue of being a divine person, of his voluntary Passion as a 'theandric' operation. This tradition is non-psychological. It offers no sort of an answer to the kind of questions we today want to ask, which concern experience and the manner in which things come to be known. The question is, how does this tradition, in its obvious essential rightness, make it into our psychological age? More precisely, what is the psychological connection, the connection in the mind of Jesus, between the immediacy with which he knows God and the death for others to which he is drawn? The answer I am groping for lies in a dying of ego into the very self of all humankind, into the self that is one in all according to Eckhart, the self that is the universally rejected and willed into unbeing and must be shamefully and publicly reduced to unbeing on a cross to swallow sin in the righteousness of God.

I slipped into the Pauline formula in the last statement. One interesting thing about the original formulations of the mystery is that they are more psychological than the intervening scholastic

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tradition — not surprisingly so, since they bear the marks of an original experience of being liberated.

But who can possibly know the mind of Jesus, it will be asked. The question shows a false dualism, that cuts off the subjective from the objective. What we are enquiring into is the mind that has become ours, that is the shape of Christian tradition, in its luminous centre. This ‘mind’, spanning inner surrender and political death in love, entered the consciousness of his followers, was repressed by them, exploded in them with the immediacy of a public execution, and finally took possession of them as the liberation of desire into our future, the door closed on the past by an open and empty tomb.

Once we can think of the psychology of Jesus as the progressive dying of ego into the self that is the victim of all sin to die on a cross thus reversing an otherwise inexorable law, an important clarification results. It concerns the two traditionally observed dimensions of salvation already referred to, namely those of transformation (deification) and healing. They are more mutually involved *and* more distinct than I had realized. For the supernatural solution to the problem of evil is, precisely, that solution that does not take on the problem of evil as the thing to be dealt with, but *swallows* the problem of evil in the love that brings the finite into union with the infinite. Jesus the divine self of humanity, the realization of that ‘scintilla of God, as mysterious as Godhead itself’, as Eckhart says, descends to where sin puts this divine self, descends into our hell, the hell of the death camp of this world, the hell of ‘the murderous grotesque of our time’, as Voegelin calls it, and rises *thence*, drawing us with him, into the divine union that knows nothing of sin. The Atonement is the becoming-ours of the divine perspective in which there is no sin.

It is also a perspective in which ‘there are no dead’ (echoing the conclusion of *The Bluebird* by Maeterlink) The notion of ‘the dead’ as a realm of darkness, alien even to God, is the creation of sin. And the notion that death is the consequence or penalty of sin is a cover-story for sin’s creation of the realm of the dead, the realm of those outside God. The psalmic image of the dead as outside God’s care is the sinful perspective made overt and therefore redeemable by Christ.

We now have to see how this category of ‘the dead’ is dissolved in the light of Easter. But before we leave this section, let me observe something important about the kind of soteriology that I am attempting. The tradition upon which it draws, that which locates Jesus’s efficacy as victim in his unique status as divine, is not psychological but metaphysical. Redemption is something brought about by God in virtue of the ‘merits’ of Jesus. What I

think is implicit in Lonergan's 'law of the Cross' is the working of this divine causality *in the changing affect* of human beings as they encounter the Crucified and Risen One. The kind of 'pathetic' soteriology longed for by Abelard is realizable, I think, as a development of the main tradition.

5. *The Liberation of Desire*

The death of Jesus brought his followers to a death of ego into the self *itself* denied by them in their solidarity with all humanity and in their betrayal and denial and flight. There is something much more radical and tragic here than the normal mystical death of ego into self. As Jesus died into the self to be crucified, so they died into the self to find themselves its crucifiers. It was out of this death, this ultimate shame of humanity, that he, come to his term and resolving the immemorial human impasse, lifted them up to a new and eternal life. We now have to try to enter into their Easter awakening.

In the gospel narrative, this awakening had two focal points: the encounters with the Risen One and the discovery of the empty tomb. What is the link between the knowledge that Jesus was risen and the discovery of the tomb empty? The spontaneous reaction to this question is that the answer is so obvious that the question is not worth posing. The Resurrection *is*, surely, the raising of the body from the grave. But if we settle for this definition, we run straight into the following difficulty: the Resurrection is of its very nature invisible — you don't *see* death overcome — while the disappearance of the body was of its nature visible, an invisible disappearance being sheer nonsense. So the (invisible) Resurrection cannot be the (visible) disappearance of the body.

Now what enables this difficulty to show itself is the switch from just sitting here and thinking of the Resurrection happening to stretching our imagination to recapturing the experience of people dealing with a transforming presence and an empty tomb, and having to put those two experiences together. Suddenly twenty centuries of Christian obviousness fall away, and something of an original experience wholly without precedent is felt: an experience not only without precedent, but also, according to the best scholarship, without a religious category to put it in. There was no category for the resurrection (a) of one man as opposed to all, be he even the Messiah, (b) in this time as opposed to the end time. The whole *ethos* of 'the resurrection of the dead', of the tombs being opened and 'the sea giving up its dead', belongs in another mental world, another time, an after time, necessarily prefaced by the judgement of God on the whole of human history.

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So overwhelming was the coming-through of the meaning of Jesus, that meaning or intention having already inserted itself ruinously in the untransformed ego of the disciples to erupt into the liberation that was Easter, that it suggested a daring way of dealing with the single-person resurrection problem. Jesus did not have to wait until the Judgement created resurrection-time, since he was the Judge! The final judgement of God on history was the supernatural solution of the problem of evil, the transmuting of sin into love with Jesus as the agent. This was the righteousness of God that came upon Luther in the most humble of human postures. The presence of Jesus, causing a total liberation of desire, compelled them to talk of him as they talked about God. And *then* — and then only — the empty tomb would begin to make sense, and a most extraordinary sense: a gratuitous, crudely empirical evidence in our small world for something in another world altogether, a sort of an exclamation mark in our common world, appended to the statement that this world is ended. There is a curious quality of misfit about the empty tomb discovery, and I have always remembered C. H. Dodd's statement that it was recorded rather as something they did not quite know what to do with. I mean, imagine getting absorbed in Stanley Spencer's extraordinary resurrection mural in the Cookham church, and then stepping out into the sunshine and seeing the graves moving! God, I'd ring my therapist. Far from being a *prerequisite* for the Resurrection faith, as the lazy Christian imagination has made it, the empty tomb is an empirical intrusion, and a very memorable one. Rowan Williams sees its discovery on 'the first day of the week' as the origin of the Christian Sunday, and sees it as the focus of 'that echo of bewilderment, shock and disorientation which we have noted in all our stories'. He goes on:

The risen one, the exalted one, addresses the community from *outside*. The horizon of the apostolic band is forcibly opened up by a manifestation which takes a very long time to understand and unpack. So the Gospels and Paul imply. And for all four Gospels, the story which identifies the ultimate source of this disorientation is that of the empty tomb (*Resurrection1*, Darton Longman and Todd, 1982, p. 105.)

So the right question about the empty tomb is not 'Does a resurrection entail an empty tomb?', but 'Was the empty tomb for the first Christians a dreamed-up story or a real memory?' If you ask the first question and answer 'Yes', then you are defining the Resurrection as the disappearing of the body, and so are comfortably, and 'conservatively' short of the Resurrection kerygma. If you answer 'No', then you are claiming to know what a resurrection is, just as does your conservative opponent. And you are allowing this controlling *a priori* to block out the overwhelming evidence that the

empty tomb story — with its dependence on the women, not accepted then as witnesses — is a memory and not a legend. And there is the strange anomaly that if the Resurrection does not entail an empty tomb (which ‘liberals’ tend to say it does not) then the first Christians had no cause to invent one (which ‘liberals’ tend to say they did). The answer is that the Resurrection neither does nor does not entail an empty tomb. I neither have, nor have not, stopped beating my spouse. How the eternal inserts itself in time is perpetually surprising, never a neat or final fit.

I understand that Joseph Fitzmyer asks the question ‘Is the empty tomb the beginning of the Resurrection, or the end of the Crucifixion?’ The latter answer — his I think — enralls me. Certainly, for the women the empty tomb was the crucifixion of ego that the crucifixion was for the men.

I see this way of dealing with the empty tomb story as essentially part of an overall concern to bring to our theology an aesthetic, imaginal effort, to have the events that have changed history forever enact themselves in the psychic roots of the desire to know.

Finally, what is the significance of the Resurrection being invisible? The answer to this question will serve to recapitulate this paper. First of all, not only is the Resurrection invisible, but so is the Risen One, his appearances as sacramental and adaptive as is the empty tomb. PHEME PERKINS is very strong on the felt presence of Jesus as the primary evidence of the Resurrection, and remarks that Christianity is unique in having no privileged disciple seen as succeeding the Master. So let us go back from this endpoint, Jesus as Lord and Christ at the Father’s right hand and alive in his Church, to the beginning.

Desire is, in essence, infinite, but its objects are always finite. Troilus says to Cressida, ‘This is the monstrosity in love, Lady, that the will is infinite, the execution confined, the desire boundless, the act a slave to limit’. But experience over a lifetime reveals a pattern of changing and deepening desire, in which I begin to realize, through a succession of deaths, what *I* — the true self — want, which is the infinite. Life is desire slowly becoming itself. Life is the progressive liberation of desire.

Now I see Jesus, in whom the scintilla of God in the human is uniquely shaping of the whole personality, in whom *le moi* of the west is at one with *le soi* of the east, as awakening in his disciples their desire *in its infinity*. Still this desire, while feeling its infinity, was necessarily channelled into the finite Jesus, its awakener. At the climax of the story, the channel is destroyed, to produce a death of ego in which *everything* is lost. With the risen Jesus, desire infinite in its essence becomes infinite in its exercise. Desire is liberated, becomes itself. This is why the Risen One is invisible,

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partakes of the invisibility of God known in the Spirit. Resurrection is the liberation of desire.

Finally the unknown, Beginning, Arche, Brahman, Abba for Jesus but for the alienated world a question, in whom Jesus is wholly invested and in this dangerous investment goes to the Cross, becomes, in the explosive resolution of the law of the Cross, the intimate, and this enormous *rapprochement* in the depths of our spirit is the Holy Spirit, who 'bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God, who cry out Abba Father!'

Finally, I would leave you with a question. How is it that Jesus on the Cross has become such a depressing image, the exact opposite of the total *élan* of *eros* that he fundamentally represents? How can a Joseph Campbell see it as so much less vital than the images of Krishna and Shiva? I suggest the following: Jesus on the Cross is our self, denied by us, identified with by him, and raised in him to life in God. But we fail to accept this supernatural solution to the problem of evil which brings to life the true self in whose perspective there is no sin. We cannot believe in a God who has reversed our immemorial self-repression, and so, presented with the potent symbol of this reversal, we make of it a super-symbol of *the repression itself*. What Jesus on the Cross is doing is *denying* desire, to obey the will of God. Who shall revive this limping Christianity and have it leap again?

LEX CRUCIS

The death within self and death sin-intended
Intersect in the one we crucified.
Only with this are sin's ravages mended,
Reversed the vast inexorable tide.
The point of intersect, immediacy
To the eternal making him alone
The self that we deny, nail to a tree
And look upon to know our heart of stone.
Will not to be encounters its surprise
Seeing whom we undo rise up before us
Only to disappear so that the eyes
Release desire into the first chorus.
Hence death within self is political
Love that releases a whole world in thrall.